

**CONTEXTUALIZING AND NEGOTIATING NATIONAL IDENTITY THROUGH
IDEOLOGICAL FISSURES:
REPRESENTATIONS OF THE AFRO SUBJECT IN THE DOMINICAN NOVEL,
1936-2006**

by

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This dissertation's principal objective is to examine the relationship between race and national belonging in the Dominican Republic, and to illustrate the necessity of moving beyond simplistic binaries when attempting to define and understand the process of Dominican national identity formation. In the analysis, I compare the manner in which the Afro subject—the Haitian, the West Indian *cocolo*, and the Afro-Dominican—is represented in three sugar-cane novels from the 1930s (General Rafael Trujillo's first decade in power), and in two much more recent works published in a politically less restrictive environment close to the turn of the millennium. The main point of reference for this study is an ideology that defines Haitians—and by extension those that resemble Haitians racially—as the opposite against which Dominicans identify themselves.

My analysis of the representation of the Afro subject relates to the way race-making functions within the chosen narratives—as evidenced by the extent to which these works, on the one hand, participate in this subject's negative Othering, and on the other hand point to shared socio-historical and geographical spaces, embracing a politics of social justice or an anti-racist agenda. Through a concept referred to as “fissures”—or openings in the ideological fabric of the

text—the analysis demonstrates how all five novels are ambivalent regarding their positioning towards the Afro subject's place in the national arena. This type of tension illustrates that the process of constructing concepts of race and consequentially of belonging—essential to Dominican identity formation—is fluid, subjective, and complex, rather than built upon a historically univocal rejection of Haitians. In this way, my study inserts itself in a body of interdisciplinary scholarship demonstrating that a variety of currents and ideologies about race relations, identity formation, and nation building have always *coexisted* in the Dominican Republic.

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INTRODUCTION (S)

Since the onset of modernity and the European “discovery and conquest” of what is today known as Latin America, questions of race and race relations have been characterized as complex and multifaceted. The colonial system played a fundamental role in shaping the very notion of race, as well as the way that different racial groups were defined and how they related to each other. Naturally, there was quite a bit of variation depending on the manner in which different metropolises chose to administrate their new territories as well as because of local particularities.

The Spanish colonizers—who occupied two thirds of the Latin American territory—came from a society where one’s place within the social hierarchy was determined by such concepts as “limpieza de sangre”, employed during the Inquisition to prevent all those categorized as Others (particularly Jews and Moors) from prospering and advancing in Spanish primitive capitalism. As Tolentino argues, “ese criterio [...] se prolongaría con una nueva envoltura conceptual hasta los indios y los africanos en América,” where a merely religious-based distinction was not sufficient to ensure the self-ascribed superiority of the European colonists (70). It was, on the one hand, this already present attitude of European and Christian superiority stemming from contemporary politics in the metropolis, and, on the other hand, the urgent need for cheap labor to advance Spain’s economic interests in the colonies—first satisfied by enslaved natives and later by imported African slaves—that led to the development of a *sociedad de castas*, stratified according to skin color. White Spaniards occupied the highest

echelon, followed by white *criollos* (those born on Hispaniola), different mixed-race categories dwelled in the middle of the hierarchy, and the darkest-skinned individuals at the very bottom. Not being born a Christian was, as it had been in the case of the Spanish Jews and Moors, still one of the pretexts used to justify the Other's inferior position on the social scale, and in that sense was employed in a way complementary to skin color. Keeping these factors affecting the majority of Spanish colonies in mind, let us now turn specifically to the case of Quisqueya.¹

HISTORICAL CONTEXTS

When we compare the Dominican Republic to the other Hispanic Caribbean islands of Cuba and Puerto Rico in terms of their colonial history, one difference immediately stands out: the former's importance and success as a plantation society did not arise until the second half of the 19th century. As plantations—operated by slave labor—have historically played such a critical role in the establishment of racial hierarchies in colonial societies, this is of utter importance, as it sets the stage for the way racial identities are later negotiated in the Dominican Republic. As gold mining was being replaced by the nascent sugar industry in Hispaniola at the beginning of the sixteenth century, the latter became the driving element behind the early importation of African slave labor. As the colonizer assigned the black slave to the lowest social strata, class prejudice was easily turned into racial prejudice. The difference in skin color between the exploiter and the exploited was a simple and obvious way to justify the inhumane treatment of the slaves, and to ascribe natural inferiority to them (Tolentino 174). Power relations between

¹ “Quisqueya” is the Taino name for Hispaniola, it means “tierra grande.” Today it is mainly used to refer to the Dominican Republic.

light-skinned colonizers and dark-skinned slaves were established in a way that would ensure the former's superiority over the latter, and that would be directly related to the concept of racial difference. Hispanophilia, or the placing of highest values on those elements associated with Spanish heritage (whiteness, Catholicism, Spanish language) and Afrophobia, or the rejection of all things associated with African heritage (blackness, non-Christian religious practices, creolized expression) are the dominant concepts that would later develop out of these foundations of racial differentiation laid during the early colonial period. And these concepts would, in their due time, become the pillars of an ideology designed to maintain the power structures favoring the established elites in place.

However, let us briefly return to the earlier days of the colony. As I have already mentioned above, and as Silvio Torres-Saillant points out, the colonial Dominican sugar industry collapsed in the seventeenth century, and has no direct historical connection with today's *ingenious* (sugar plantations). In Santo Domingo, this collapse caused an economic deterioration so severe that the institution of slavery became virtually unsustainable, leading to a breakdown of the racial codes inherent to plantation society. As a consequence, free blacks became a majority and the social distance between blacks and whites shrank, resulting in a largely ethnically hybrid population. "Gradually the semantic field of blackness became restricted to *slavery* and *subversion*, fostering thereby a conceptual space that permitted free blacks and mulattos in Santo Domingo to step outside the racialized constraint of their color to configure their identity or align themselves politically according to other criteria" (32). However, although the free inhabitants of Santo Domingo had achieved a certain socio-economic equality by the seventeenth century, rather than affirming blackness, a tendency to distance oneself from it and to self-identify as white—at least socially—was persistent. This may be illustrated by the

adoption of the racial category of *blanco de la tierra*, which Pérez Cabral describes as “una suerte de blanco de América por cuyas arterias circulaba ciertamente una dosis dada de sangre europea [...] El habitante pardo, no importa que fuese más blanco o menos blanco, se declaró por sí mismo blanco del país” (81). Taking these developments into consideration, it becomes easily apparent how they could facilitate a later national discourse that would seek to “exteriorate” all things connected to blackness, and allow for an identity construction centered on an opposition with everything considered “African” in a nation made up of a majority of Afro-descendants. On the one hand, the historical processes outlined above prevented an affirmation of blackness in the identity construction of people of African descent, and thereby limited the possibility of solidarity among blacks², and, on the other hand, also offered the foundation upon which Creole and light-skinned Dominican elites could then build and propagate an “intellectual negrophobia” used to control the lower classes (33). While blackness became a negative referent in identity construction, it also became easier for a large part of the Afro-descendant population to disassociate itself from this stigma. During this time of a development of what Juan Bosch called the “democracia racial³ dominicana, una actitud muy extendida en la masa del pueblo,” it already becomes clear that the elites strove to cling to the white privilege inherited from colonial structures: “si bien vivamente rechazada en los grupos minúsculos de la oligarquía nacional” (124). The processes outlined so far present the foundation of a national ideology that embraces

² Torres-Saillant affirms that a great tradition of subversive self-affirmation among Blacks in the Dominican Republic exists, articulated through slave insurrections, maroons etc., but that it does not form part of the history curriculum supposed to teach the meaning of Dominicaness (37).

³ The concept of “racial democracy” refers to the myth that in various Latin American nations—for instance in Brazil, Cuba, or Colombia—racial prejudice does not exist; when in reality these societies are profoundly racially stratified. The lack of such an acknowledgement has historically negated Afro populations in these countries a space from which to address grievances brought upon them by the racial discrimination they have continued to experience.

the values propagated by those few oligarchs at the top—whiteness, Catholicism, Spanish heritage—while completely suppressing any acknowledgement of the historical participation and contribution of the African element to what was soon to become the Dominican nation.

The Haitian occupation of Santo Domingo, lead by the Jean-Pierre Boyer government from 1822 to 1844, deserves some closer attention here, as it propelled the development described above in a number of ways. The occupation had a number of objectives: first, to deter a French invasion of Santo Domingo, aimed at the re-conquest of Haiti. Second, Boyer wanted to unify the whole island under one government. Third, after the fall of Henri Christophe, there were many unemployed military officers constantly threatening Boyer's government, who through an invasion of the Eastern part of the island would be occupied (Moya Pons, *A National History* 120). According to Moya Pons, one of the reasons why the Dominican President Nuñez de Cáceres saw no alternative but to cede power to Boyer was that "the majority of the [Dominican] population was mulatto, and many were favorably disposed to the unification with Haiti. To them, the Haitian government promised land, the abolition of taxes, and the liberation of the few remaining slaves" (123). Boyer's policies, however, did not necessarily win him many favors with the Dominicans. "Despite the good intentions of the president, the Haitian political economy, the legal organization of property ownership, and the agricultural labor policies had alienated the majority of the Dominican population" (134). As Marveta Ryan points out, the aggressiveness with which the president attempted to implement his policies, for instance on land tenure and plantation-style agricultural production for export, had many Dominicans convinced that "Haitians were willing and able to overpower their country by any means." (25) Throughout two centuries of separation and different colonial occupations, the Western and Eastern parts of

the island had developed two different societies, with dissimilar economic, racial, cultural, and legal systems, differences that Boyer was unable to overcome through his policies.

How did this then aid the development of anti-Haitian ideologies? First, the colonial elites saw their economic and social privileges threatened in a society where blacks and whites were treated equally, and where new agricultural reforms were implemented with the goal to redistribute *terrenos comuneros*, to the majority of which the white elites—émigrés and the Catholic Church—held titles (Gregory 179). Second, the Haitian occupants provided exactly the kind of counter-example these elites were looking to define themselves against: they severed ties with the Roman Catholic church, and attempted to obliterate European traditions, and, above all, they embraced their African heritage (after the Haitian revolution, all Haitian citizens were defined as “black”). The definition of one’s identity does not only include the elements one takes ownership of, but necessarily also establishes precisely those elements that shall not be part of one’s view of self. The Haitian presence in Santo Domingo during the first half of the nineteenth century then gave the Dominican elites a perfect counter-identity in opposition to which they would be able to construct an identity of Dominicaness that would, in the long run, help them preserve their status and privilege. In this sense, to borrow Stephen Gregory’s term, the invasion of 1822 could be seen as the *Ur-moment* of what was to become known as *anti-haitianismo* (179), a (mainly racial) ideology that defined everything Dominican as the contrary of what was propagated to be Haitian: African heritage, syncretized religion, creolized language, and racial equality.

There is another important element that greatly contributed to the dominance of *anti-haitianismo* as a predominant basis for national ideology. Even though the number of slaves left in the Dominican Republic by the time of the Haitian invasion was—in comparison to Cuba or

Puerto Rico—relatively small, it is important to note that the fact that the Haitian “occupiers” abolished slavery in the Eastern part of the island speaks exactly against a colonialist history of emancipation, in which enlightened European humanitarians and intellectuals were credited with bringing freedom to the slaves (Branche *Colonialism* 117). Rather, abolition was realized by a nation whose Afro-descendant population had recently risen and gained their country’s independence, and which defined all of its citizens as “black,” regardless of their color. May this fact have contributed to the setting-in-motion of the anti-Haitian discourse, as it severely threatened established racial hierarchies and perceptions of agency? As we have already seen, the Haitian was instituted as a “master trope of blackness” in the Dominican Republic (and elsewhere). Not only had the Haitians freed the slaves in the Eastern part of the island, the recently concluded Haitian Revolution inspired a new discourse that was used by the creole elites in many places in Latin America: “race war,” or *guerra de castas*. The prevention of such a “race war”—or the fear that the Haitian Revolution would spread beyond the Western Hemisphere’s second republic’s borders and drive other slave and Afro-descendant populations to rebel and turn against the local elites—informed national projects in a great part of nineteenth-century Latin America,⁴ including that of the Dominican Republic. We have to remember that the political atmosphere at the time was saturated by an epistemology based on the opposition of civilization and savagery, defined in racial terms (San Miguel 123). The fear of a new invasion

⁴ The fear of “race war” informed the way nations were built in many parts of the Caribbean and Latin America upon independence from Spain. In Colombia, for example, a strategy of inclusion was used to foster the invisibility of Afro-descendants; a discourse of “national harmony” was used to keep them at bay as citizens (see Helg for more information). In Cuba, the situation was similar (almost half a century later), when, in the revolutionary effort, blacks were freed and included in the ranks of the revolutionary army under a nationalist ideology, but largely prevented from participating in post-revolutionary politics, partially due to the intervention of racially segregated US forces in 1898 (see Ferrer).

and the persistent menace of what was referred to as “race war” were then exploited by Dominican elites to fashion a model of national identity that would allow them to further propagate white supremacy and to keep a majority Afro-descendent population in check. It also allowed them link the concept of “threat” to “blackness,” a combination that would continuously be used by the elites to justify the exploitation of and discriminatory policies against those individuals defined as Afro-descendants. This threat, as we have seen, is presented as one that emanates naturally from outside of the national territory that is defined as Hispanic, Catholic, and white. This vision, together with mid-nineteenth century immigration policies aimed at maximizing the influx of light-skinned individuals over dark-skinned ones, helped carve out the Afro-descendant’s place as *foreigner*. Until now I have attempted to broadly outline the origins of the negrophobic and anti-Haitian national discourse adopted and propagated by the white elites in the Dominican Republic, a country populated largely by Afro-descendants. It may be said that the top strata of society found a way to preserve or re-instate the colonial racial order in post-colonial society, despite the deterioration of the plantation system that formed the initial base for such hierarchies.

The above-presented version of the events and effects of the Haitian Revolution in regard to Dominican national identity construction is the most widely accepted one by scholars and historians alike. However, particularly keeping in mind the focus of this analysis, it is essential to also consider that just as the Dominican Republic—contrary to national discourse especially under Trujillo and Balaguer—is not a homogenous nation, the Haitian occupation was not met with a homogenous adverse reaction by all parts of the population. In fact, Sibylle Fischer points out that it is generally agreed upon that neither in 1801 nor in 1822 there was an anti-Haitian outpouring in the Eastern part of the island (169). In agreement, the historian Franklin Franco

Pichardo asserts that the unification in 1822 “se efectuó sin el disparo de un solo tiro, pues contó con el apoyo de la mayoría de sus pobladores, salvo la pequeña aristocracia colonial blanca y ciertos sacerdotes influyentes” (*Historia* 181). In some of the border towns, such as Dajabón and Montecristi, the pro-Haitian party proclaimed independence from Spain and sought protection of Haitian laws before Boyer ever invaded the Western part of the island. The pressure was great enough to lead to Nuñez de Cáceres’ proclamation of the Independent State of Spanish Haiti, which only lasted a few months until Boyer’s arrival (Moya Pons 122). As Martínez points out, at least until 1836 blacks and mulattoes in the Eastern half of the island preferred the Haitian rulers to the previous Spanish colonial government. This observation makes a lot of sense especially in the light of the abolition of slavery and the greater prospects for prosperity within these classes through land reform and the opening of new ports for international trade (86). Even after independence in 1844, a rebellion by Afro-Dominicans—lead by Santiago Basora, an African-born immigrant—took place in Monte Grande, and successfully negotiated with President Bobadilla to officially guarantee the end of slavery in the Dominican Republic (Hernández and López 80).

It then becomes clear that, while there is undoubtedly a history of a dominant anti-Haitian discourse, not all Dominicans univocally subscribed to it. And as Ryan argues, there are notable fissures in anti-Haitian discourse even in literary works that critics have qualified as examples of anti-Haitian sentiments, such as “Diálogo”, a 19th century poem by the Dominican Juan Antonio Alix. This piece calls into question such concepts as Dominicanness, and it does so by exposing the commonalities between the two oppositional poetic voices, one Haitian, the other Dominican (24), in terms of superstitions and even linguistically. Sibylle Fischer comments that this poem can be understood as a piece that “documents that the antagonism between the Dominican

Republic and Haiti may not have come as naturally as some of the racist ideologues of the twentieth century have pretended [...] Radical otherness obviously had to be created before it could operate as part of Dominican nationalist ideology” (173). These observations complicate dominant visions of intrinsic and insurmountable differences between the two populations, as well as that of a historically univocal rejection of Haitians—and in conjunction, Africanness—in the Dominican Republic. They may also provide a background for a historical possibility of and an interest in developing a more Afro-centric conscience by the contemporary writers that are included in this analysis.

During the second half of the nineteenth century, another element was added to the official story of how the Dominican nation was formed: the legend of indigenous heritage. This current—until today prevalent in Dominican identity⁵—instituted itself as a reaction to the great military participation and ascension in ranks by the Afro-descendant masses during the Restoration War against Spain from 1863 through 1865 (Franco *Historias* 22). Dominicans, according to the legend, are a mixture of brave Taino Indians and Spaniards, although “the Indian population of La Española was almost totally exterminated toward the beginning of the sixteenth century and [...] Dominican culture is predominantly neo-African” (Valerio-Holguín “Primitive Borders” 80). According to Doris Sommer, it was Manuel de Jesús Galván’s novel *Enriquillo: Leyenda dominicana* (1882) that helped propagate “Enriquillo [as the] national hero

⁵ According to Valerio-Holguín, “the myth of presumed Indian *mestizaje* gained further ground during the first American Occupation (1916-1924), since the Americans, faced with the variety of racial mixes, began to register Dominican citizens in official documents as being “Indian” (79). The idea of racial identification as Indian has been so ingrained in Dominican self-perception that until 2012, the majority of citizens were labeled as “indios” in the skin color category of their national identification card (Sagás, *Race and Politics* 130-31). “Indio” was thereby transformed from being a mere linguistic displacement of the terms “black” or “mulato” to becoming an official racial category.

of the Dominican Republic, the ideological shelter against African (that is Haitian) identity in a country of dark people” (*One Master* 256). Thanks to the ensuing legend—to whose creation the novel contributed greatly—blacks are considered foreigners, Haitians (“El otro Enriquillo”124). The reincarnation of the already extinct Indian then served as a mechanism to divert the masses in their search of the roots of their identity, and to nurture an atmosphere of difference between Dominicans and Haitians with a renewed focus on whiteness as legitimate origin (Franco *Historias* 23, Stinchcomb 8-9). *Enriquillo*, written at a time when the *indigenista* movement was already fully formed, presents the culmination of the fusion of the two cultural ideologies that would suppress slavery and anti-slavery memory: hispanism and indigenism, presented as two forces that were not antagonistic, but rather, complementary.⁶ Considering the lack of any evidence of a popular Dominican belief in indigenous descent at the time, it becomes clear that a genealogy based on the “coppery” and extinct Indian was a primary elite *choice* in order to supplant any connection to the Africanness henceforth to be associated with the foreigner, and above all with Haiti.

What we have seen so far underscores the notion that, just as in the rest of Latin America, dealing with questions of race in the Dominican Republic has historically been a complex issue. The issue of sugar that opened this brief overview remains central to the negotiation of racial realities and the exclusion of the black foreigner from the national imaginary in the 19th and 20th centuries. The question of negrophobia against dark-skinned migrants became increasingly prevalent as the Dominican sugar industry started growing again and reached an industrial scale

⁶ An in-depth discussion of the foundations and manifestations of this relationship would far surpass the limits of this analysis. Please see Fischer, particularly pages 152-69, for a more thorough examination of the topic, and for arguments that explain how the creation of this fantasy served to suppress the Dominican reality of having been modernized by former slaves.

of production in the 1870s. The way that the division of labor was structured in these modern *ingenios* was directly tied to the development of an anti-Haitian ideology (Gregory 180). Soon the industry became reliant on migrant labor, as there was little interest within the Dominican population to work in these refineries due to extremely low salaries that were offered in exchange for backbreaking labor. Precisely because they worked for so little, these migrant workers—generally Haitians and other Afro Antilleans—were soon scorned by the local workers. Dawn Stinchcomb affirms that “the fact that foreign workers were preferred over Dominicans is the most likely cause for the renewed anti-black sentiment in the Dominican Republic” (64). National and local elites as well as government officials—since the Dominican state was much more involved with controlling labor than governments in other Central American or Caribbean locations—exploited this growing rift. Dividing working classes along ethnic and racial lines was a key in the “government managed system of semi-coerced exploitation,” where “anti-black racism and anti-Haitian xenophobia complemented the state’s increasing control over the migrant labor for sugar production” (Mayes 8). The historians Orlando Inoa and Michiel Baud have both argued that while *anti-haitianismo* certainly takes from older forms of racism, it served the state as a way of justifying the exploitation of migrant cane cutters in the sugar industry. Two facts are important to remember: First, that other currents of thought existed that were not nearly as Afro-phobic⁷, and second, that anti-Haitianism and Hispanophilia were not naturally prevailing or historically inherent phenomena in the Dominican Republic, but rather one among a number of currents that was explored by the state and the elites and thereby became dominant.

⁷ Please see Mayes for a detailed exploration of these alternative currents—among them pan-Antilleanism—led by intellectuals such as Bonó and Luperón.

In 1893 the first workers arrived from the English-speaking Caribbean, and from the outset, these laborers were located outside of the national imaginary, particularly because of their skin color. The *Listín Diario*, the main national newspaper in Santo Domingo, referred to them as a “negra nube de mendigos” in 1900 (Inoa 32). The refinery owners’ rationale for hiring them was the possibility of exploitation: “tal inmigración era un regalo del cielo [...] solo se pide un jornal de 40 centavos, mientras que el dominicano no trabaja por tan poco” (Inoa 34). In today’s literature, these workers from the lesser Antilles are referred to as *cocolos*, and this presents an important connection between this migrant group and the Haitians that by the 1920s had replaced them as the largest group of *braceros extranjeros* in the sugar estates. According to Orlando Inoa, a variety of theories about the origin of the term *cocolo* exists, the most plausible being that in the South of the country, Dominican sugar workers called “los negros haitianos que atravesaban la frontera” by this name. The Dominican poet Norberto James Rawlings, of West-Indian descent, confirms this version. He remembers that throughout his childhood, the term *cocolo* “compartía rango con maldito haitiano” (Inoa 31). The following quote shows that the *cocolos* were subjected to the same national ideology that defined them as a menace wanting to invade and take over Dominican territory, in other words, “blacken” it. Once again, the *Listín Diario* (1912): “Después de que [el pueblo dominicano] ha resistido victoriosamente ataques de españoles, franceses, ingleses y haitianos, [no puede dejar] que gentes que no son lo mejor de su tierra se apoderen de una de nuestras provincias y la conviertan en una sucursal de *Cocolandia*” (Inoa 36). Dawn Stinchcomb also points to the connection between West Indian and Haitian migrant workers, and the discrimination they experienced. The critic affirms that “clearly, the Dominican anti-*cocolo* sentiment stems from Dominican anti-Haitianism” (Stinchcomb 65). April Mayes suggests that contemporary anti-black racism in the Dominican Republic partially

emerged as a reaction against not only Haitians, but also against Afro-Antilleans (38). In my analysis, I choose to include the West Indian *cocolos* as a sort of “representative” of non-Dominican Afro-Antilleans as a group, because of their situational proximity to the Haitians. It is of particular interest to this analysis to see how these two groups of Afro-descendant migrants are treated similar or different in their literary representations.⁸

Table 1: Migrant sugar workers in the Dominican Republic 1885-1935

Time period	West Indian <i>cocolos</i>	Haitians
1885	500	<i>Not specified</i>
Estimated migration between 1900-1920	2500-4000/year	5000/year
1920 census	5763	28258
1935 census	9272	52657

Sources: *No Longer* 116, Moya Pons *La otra historia* 169, Wooding and Moseley-Williams 26

As the preceding table shows, by the 1920s, Haitians had superseded the West-Indians in numbers. Their precarious living situation, hunger and their proximity to the *ingenios* made them readily available (Stinchcomb 64). During the first three decades of the twentieth century, sugar production and export, despite rapidly falling prices during the 1920s, soared, which translated

⁸ West Indian sugar workers remained a relatively small migrant group in comparison to their Haitian counterparts, but their descendants still form a stable community that has preserved certain traditions like religion and language today, particularly in the area of San Pedro de Macorís (and other, smaller settlements in Puerto Plata, Azua, Barahona, El Seibo). After the 1937 massacre, as many Haitians returned to their country of origin, *cocolos* were once again needed as workers during the sugar harvest (Stinchcomb 65).

into a high demand for cheap labor. Although it is difficult to establish an exact number of Haitian migrants to the Dominican Republic, it is estimated that there were hundreds of thousands who came to work in the sugar estates (Martínez 41-42). Anti-immigrant legislation tightened, but generally exemptions were given to the sugar industry. With that many Haitians present on the Eastern part of the island, and an already developed attitude of *anti-haitianismo* among the Dominican population, it was not a difficult task for General Rafael Trujillo Molina, who took power in 1930, to exploit this sentiment to further vilify the Haitians, and make them the scapegoat for all Dominican problems: social, economic, political. The formerly envisioned threat of a military invasion based on the occupation in the first half of the nineteenth century, now gave way to a newly perceived menace of a peaceful invasion, a so-called *invasión pacífica*. “It was feared that Haiti might insidiously gain hegemony over all of Hispaniola through the infiltration of its numerically superior population onto Dominican territory” (Martínez 44).⁹

In October of 1937, Trujillo made an announcement that Haitians in the frontier region would no longer be tolerated, which was followed by *El corte*,¹⁰ a horrible massacre that killed between 8,000 and 30,000 men, women, and children in the border region and the northern area often referred to as El Cibao.¹¹ The victims included not only Haitians, but also Dominicans

⁹ As Samuel Martínez points out, migration from West to East had been a common phenomenon since colonial times, since the border was hardly controlled by either government, and the Dominican side was sparsely populated, becoming the home of many thousands of Haitians who worked in the Dominican Republic’s agricultural sector (44).

¹⁰ Andrés Mateo explains that the massacre was denominated “El corte” by the troops who carried out the assassinations, because the entire operation was executed with knives and machetes, and without firearms. The term *El corte* itself is an enveloping metaphor, as it also refers to the Haitians’ principal activity in the Dominican Republic: the cutting of sugarcane (113).

¹¹ El Cibao is a region that comprises the Northern parts of the Dominican Republic, and spreads across a significant number of provinces (all the way from Dajabon in the West to La Vega in the South and Samaná in the East). It is known for its fertile lands and agriculture.

taken to be Haitians (Sagás *Race and Politics* 40). Trujillo used this event for a number of purposes, among them to develop a policy to “secure, develop and transform the Dominican borderlands into a national showcase,” to increase his stronghold on the national territory, and to “develop a Dominican nationalism that could shield against ‘foreign’ influences” (Sagás “A Case of ...”). The *corte* can be seen as the violent culmination of an ongoing vilification of the Afro-descendant foreigner in the Dominican Republic, as an effort to “rid the country of the African element that most threatened the physical and cultural similarities that Dominicans believed they had with the Spanish” (Stinchcomb 65). It is also the point of departure from where *anti-haitianismo* ceased to be an important social, economical and political undercurrent or practice in Dominican society and became official state ideology. Julia Álvarez, a Dominican-American writer, is quoted in a recent article about the commemoration of the seventy-fifth anniversary of the event in the *Miami Herald*: “The mentality that allowed the massacre to happen was there. Trujillo was tapping into something in the culture. He put gasoline on the fire. [...] It’s institutionalized now.” This assertion then confirms what the preceding summary of historical events was meant to illustrate: due to political and economic circumstances in the second half of the nineteenth century that allowed and even encouraged hostility towards Afro-descendant foreigners, these kinds of attitudes had already become dominant in Dominican culture by the time the dictator took power. However, it was his actions, particularly the massacre, which made it officially part of state policy, and gave the state the power to enforce it. Within a larger frame, the *corte* also presents the starting point for this analysis. As I am interested in the evolution of the way that literature reflects upon and represents the subjects who are situated outside of and in direct opposition to the national Dominican imaginary, it makes sense to select the moment of the institutionalization of such ideology as the initial reference of departure.

Throughout Trujillo's reign, a severely negrophobic and anti-Haitian campaign was realized. One of his closest allies and later successor in the presidency, Joaquín Balaguer, for example, claims in 1947 that "the problem of race is [...] the principal problem of the Dominican Republic [...] since on it depends [...] the very existence of the nationality that for more than a century has been struggling against a more prolific race" (cited in Sagás "Case" 4). The terms of "race" and "nationality" are used without distinction, in order to underscore that Dominicans and Haitians belong to completely distinct nations *and* races. In the post-Trujillo era, the discourse did not change much. Once again, Balaguer, who served as President of the republic on three occasions (1960-62, 1966-78, 1986-1996), reiterates in his 1983 publication *La isla al revés: Haití y el destino dominicano* the possibility of a peaceful invasion and of a compromising of Dominican values and race by Haitian immigrants: "Haití sigue constituyendo un peligro de proporciones casi inconmesurables para nuestro país [...] La penetración clandestina a través de las fronteras terrestres amenaza con la desintegración de sus valores morales y étnicos a la familia dominicana" (156). In the 1990s, multiple waves of expulsions affected Haitian communities in the Dominican Republic. Nowadays, *anti-haitianismo* no longer forms part of the official state ideology (Wooding and Mosleley-Williams 94), and many intellectuals have attempted to overcome racist stereotypes and prejudice;¹² however, the problem persists in Dominican society.

In a report published in 1996, the *National Coalition of Haitian Rights* affirms the following: "This exploitation [of Haitian workers] takes place in an atmosphere of often intense anti-Haitian rhetoric abetted by major political figures, the military, and the police. Historically,

¹² See, for example, studies about the Haitian problematic realized by Veloz-Maggiolo (1977) or Matibag (2003).

its animus has been most evident in the treatment of sugarcane cutters; today it extends to Haitians (and Dominican Haitians) working in all areas of Dominican economic life” (Gavigan 4). The latter part of the statement documents a phenomenon that has increased the visibility of Haitians in contemporary Dominican society: starting in the 1980s, the economy was no longer only agriculture-based (also due to a decrease in the international price of sugar), but rather diversified to include the tourist and service sectors. Many migrants have thus moved from the rural to the urban areas in search of new opportunities. As Haitians were no longer solely confined to the *bateyes*,¹³ their presence was more intensely felt by the locals, which in turn fueled old prejudices and resentments. Soon, the old fears of a “peaceful invasion” would be reinvigorated, often leading to physical attacks¹⁴ (Amnesty International 5). This report underscores once again that the concept of “Haitian” is really a synonym for “dark-skinned”, as it is often indiscriminately applied to all people who phenotypically “fit the category,” regardless of nationality or origin. Sagás makes the claim that one of *anti-haitianismo*’s principal effects is that it allows for the discrimination against dark-skinned Dominicans, thereby keeping a large sector of society under control (“Black” 342). And a rather recent ruling by the Constitutional Tribunal in September 2013 (TC 168/13), is designed to strip four generations of Dominicans of Haitian descent—including more than 200,000 individuals—of their citizenship, essentially making them stateless and denying them all of their rights.

¹³ *Batey* is a term mainly used in Cuba and the Dominican Republic for the workers’ residential area on a plantation. It generally lacks basic necessities such as running water and plumbing.

¹⁴ In the past few years, racist and xenophobic attacks against Haitian migrant workers and Dominicans of Haitian descent have been reported with worrying frequency. [...] Amnesty International has received reports in recent years of Dominican citizens armed with firearms, sharp instruments, baseball bats and rocks attacking the homes and property of people believed to be Haitian, often solely on the basis of the color of their skin, and causing serious injuries and even death (Amnesty International 12).

However, there are also indicators that the Dominican Republic today may not be as univocally negrophobic as many critics suggest: close to half of the Dominican population voted for Francisco Gómez Peña, son of Haitian immigrants, in the 1994 presidential elections. There are a number of NGOs working particularly for and with Haitians residing within Dominican society. As recently as October 8, 2012, an already cited article published in the *Miami Herald* documenting a vigil and service dedicated to the anniversary of the 1937 massacre was part of an initiative intended to break the silence still surrounding the event that happened seventy-five years ago, and to bring attention to the current situation. The reactions to the recent tribunal's ruling have not been uniformly positive, there are pockets of activists and voices of Dominicans in and outside of the island that are speaking out against the decision, despite frequent accusations of being "un-Dominican" by those in favor of the deportations. Overall, the situation remains very complex, and far from one-dimensional.

As this short overview has shown, racial realities and dynamics in the Dominican Republic are not simply black and white. The country's history has often been reduced to a narrative of a homogeneously hostile reaction to the Haitian occupation resulting in a natural and inherent aversion against everything Haitian—and by extension African, which at the same time translated into an affinity towards Hispanicity. However, reality, particularly as it is reflected in the literary works that are part of this analysis, is much more complex. As recent scholars such as April Mayes and Samuel Martínez have skillfully argued, the image that anti-Haitianism is an all-encompassing ideology that is universally embraced by all Dominicans is not entirely accurate. Other currents have always existed, and continue to exist today. The object of interest for this study is to look at how elements of both a Trujillo and Balaguer-style Afro-phobic ideology and an ideology that calls for a more racially and culturally inclusive identity are

simultaneously present in the literary productions that I examine. While one of these currents will without a doubt be dominant within each text, I show that fissures—or openings—exist in this underlying ideological fabric, and that these fissures reveal the simultaneous presence of distinct discourses and attitudes about Afro-descendant subjects. The fact that both ideologies are present speaks about their persistence, on the one hand, and about the polemics that continue to accompany any discussion of race in a country populated by a majority of mixed-race people, on the other. That is to say that this analysis seeks to penetrate the gray zone between the absolute poles of pro and contra Afro attitudes and ideology, something that Michiel Baud has called the “fundamental ambiguity in Dominican nationalism” (147). My study’s goal is to gain a closer understanding of the relationship between propagated ideology, national identity discourse, and their real-life manifestations as reflected through literary texts. The aforementioned critic points to the “necessity to confront schemes and policies of intellectuals and politicians with the daily realities of the population” (123).¹⁵ In that sense, this analysis will look at how such daily realities are represented through the eyes of the intellectuals, and also consider what this may reveal in terms of these intellectuals’ own place in the ideological spectrum.

¹⁵ In “Constitutionally White,” Michiel Baud argues that contrary to the assumption that the ethnic and nationalistic ideology expressed by the elites is representative of the popular perception, no militant popular anti-Haitian movement has taken root among the ordinary Dominican people, even when the Haitian is continuously present in conversation and in myths, such as that of the *comegente* (140). The elitist paranoia may not necessarily be reflective of the whole population, one that is rather ethnically and ideologically diverse than homogeneous.

BEYOND RIGID BINARIES: IDENTITY, RACE, AND DISCURSIVE FISSURES

Keeping in mind the historical particularities I have just elaborated on, I will now briefly discuss some of the theoretical approaches that provide the framework for this analysis. It is essential not to consider these concepts as separate entities, but rather to look at them in the way that they are mutually related, and how they often work in synthesis. As Stuart Hall asserts in one of his famous talks: “The great collective social identities of class, of race, of nation, of gender, and of the West have been fragmented and cannot function theoretically for us as we thought they could, as ‘master concepts’. Identity needs to be thought of as ‘contradictory, as composed of more than one discourse, as composed always across the silences of the other rather than as a sealed or closed totality’” (“Old and New Identities”, cited in Mills 198).

Hall’s point is particularly precise in the case of the Dominican Republic. The Afro-descendant, as the quintessential Other, was and is at least doubly silenced by anti-Haitian and Hispanophile discourses: he or she was erased from the nation’s history to be replaced by already extinct Amerindians; and he or she was framed as exclusively Haitian¹⁶ and thereby delegated to a space outside of the national boundaries (geographically *and* culturally), permanently marginalized and without a voice. And while, as I have already discussed, *antihaitianismo* and *hispanophilia* form part of the same discourse, my analysis seeks to point to the existence of a

¹⁶ Néstor E. Rodríguez, in *La isla y su envés* (2003), and Ernesto Sagás, in *Race and Politics in the Dominican Republic* (2000), further discuss how exclusionary and discriminatory racial politics based on *antihaitianismo* affect those individuals identified as Afro-Dominicans.

multiplicity of ideological currents and discourses affecting identity formation in the country, which coexist despite their contradictory nature.

Identity, as we already know, is not a passive construct, but rather a living interaction. In essence, it is a process by which we assert common and collective values and also difference and exclusion. By nature, then, the Other plays a significant—yet not always active—role in this discursive practice that can turn into opposition and hostility. Jorge Larraín Ibáñez explains that the Other is defined in the three dimensions of time, space, and essential characteristics. This description coincides with the way the Haitian—and those that are like the Haitian—are defined by dominant discourse in the Dominican Republic: they are described as backward and primitive, as coming from beyond the boundaries of Dominican society, and as being savage and wild, a general association made with those identified as being black (13). If we accept the notion that national identities exist in two different spheres, then such a way of defining the Haitian Other forms part of the “articulated discourse” of the public sphere, which is “highly selective and constructed from above by a variety of cultural agents and institutions” and “around the interests and worldviews of some dominant classes or groups in society.” It is significant that “the criteria for defining it [national identity] are always narrower and more selective than the *increasingly complex* and diversified cultural habits and practices of the people [...] Diversity is carefully concealed behind a supposed uniformity” (Larraín Ibáñez 16-17, emphasis mine). The type of national identity that is articulated in the public sphere, then, bases itself on what Benedict Anderson refers to as an “imagined community,” a type of bond that results in deep horizontal comradeship and fraternity, minimizing any notion of difference among its members. In other words, it is a type of “social glue” with the ability to supersede differences in socio-economic status, cultural practice, or political power within the community in the instances that said

community is facing the Other against which it defines itself. The public display of national identity then aims to present such a unified picture of the nation, bound together by a self-identification with a common narrative of a shared history, culture, and values that overrides any internal discrepancies. In the case of the Dominican Republic, one of the core elements of this common narrative is that of an absolute difference to and rejection of Haitians, their history, culture, and values, and most importantly, their identification with and embrace of Africanness as part of their cultural heritage. Consequently, this type of public discourse seeks to foil any other types of bonds that may form between members of the nation and Others—for example based on a common socio-economic experience, racial identification or cultural practice—that could penetrate its own structures. It does so by essentially limiting its subjects to two choices: be a member and embrace the idea of absolute difference, or become one of the Others. It is important to note that this is the *aim* of public discourse and the way it seeks to represent national identity.

Ideology plays an essential role in this process. Stuart Hall's definition of ideology “acknowledges the means by which ideology distorts, inflects and binds individuals, without equating the ideological with falsity. In other words, ideology functions as a kind of social cement. It holds together the society and the different conflicting elements within it. However it does not necessarily invert the reality of those lived social relations. Rather it mediates those relations so that they appear to be a different kind of relation” (Davis 79). Consequentially, this analysis looks at the textual reflections of the ideology driven by dominant class interests, one based on an opposition with Haitians and Afro-elements (for example cultural and linguistic); and how this ideology is reflected in the representation of these individuals, and

in the relations between them and Dominicans. This type of mediation is what we need to keep in mind when we look at the complex process of identity formation and negotiation.

Before moving on to the discussion of the second sphere of national identity, it is important to note—as Etienne Balibar has thoroughly discussed in his chapter on “Racism and Nationalism”—that racism is necessarily a part of nationalism in general, and that the two concepts are historically entangled. The presence of racism in the case of Dominican nationalism directed towards those defined as Afro-descendants—particularly embodied by Haitians—“contributes to constituting [nationalism] by producing the fictive ethnicity around which it is organized.” (49) Balibar also refers to the term “immigration” as the “main name given to race within [...] nations of the post-colonial era” (52). Even though Balibar does not directly mention the Dominican context in his discussion, these observations certainly apply to the racist articulations of Dominican national identity by public discourse, which are clearly based on the exclusion and depreciation of black subjects in general and Haitian “immigrants” in particular.

Public discourse, however, does not always necessarily equal private practice or meanings that are accumulated in daily life. The second sphere where national identity exists is the social base as a form of personal and group subjectivity, expressing “a variety of modes of life and feelings which are sometimes not well represented in public versions of identity” (Larraín Ibáñez 16). Popular identity, then, or the way people define themselves, also vis-à-vis the Other, may not be as clear-cut and essentialist as public discourse may suggest. In his analysis of national identity in the Dominican Republic, Michiel Baud argues that while from the outside, it may seem that the population shows a “more or less passive acceptance of the constructions of the dominant groups,” these constructs may not necessarily be as successful as they initially appear (121). Baud points to the necessity to incorporate the relationship of popular

ideologies to national ideologies when addressing questions of national identity, rather than taking elite discourse at face value and as representative of all strata of Dominican society. “We must analyze the ways in which dominant groups and political elites have tried to create and manipulate national and ethnic symbols. But we cannot ignore alternative versions of nationalism and ethnicity which—implicitly or explicitly—exist” (146).

The texts that are subject to this analysis then, in a sense, give us access to a sort of “middle ground” between the two spheres. The social base is represented from the view of intellectuals who by definition have an ideological interest or a consciousness of discourse due to their position in society. Writers, thinking back to Galván, and also to *Trujillista* intellectuals such as Peña Battle, Balaguer, and later on Núñez; as well as members of the opposing camp such as Bosch, Deive, or Veloz Maggiolo, have long been very influential in shaping and carrying out the intellectual ideological debate about what defines *Dominicanness*. Thus, the authors’ works, on the one hand, may offer a view from the public space, as they represent their own vision of the social base that may be *intended* to be ideologically coherent and rigorous, but nevertheless—as my analysis illustrates—shows incoherences and contradictions. At the same time, these texts also give the reader a certain access to the social base itself, as the common people are the very subjects of the plots unfolding. This way, both spheres where national identity is shaped and manifested are included, and we meet in what I like to call the “grey zone,” or a sort of middle ground.

More specifically, this analysis seeks to shed some light on the complexities and manifestations of the literary representation of the Afro subject, in the sense that such representation may follow what has been called the dominant ideology, and also how it may be at odds with the latter. Once again, my goal is not to invoke the traditionally ascribed binaries

and categorize along such lines; I rather intend to point to the existence of complexities beyond the simple dichotomies employed by national ideologies in order to define questions of national identity and belonging in the Dominican Republic. I would like to stress that my goal is not to define the specifics of these complexities; such an exercise would far surpass the scope of this project. My analysis of a number of literary texts from two different ideological currents and time periods/environments rather intends to be a type of literary “case study.” It sets out to point to the mutual presence of a variety of ideological undercurrents in each work regardless of political affiliation or intentionality of the texts, a continuity of sorts across all of the novels considered. This then, in the literary realm, and taking literature as an intellectual reflection of the environment of its creation, confirms what the aforementioned historians like Mayes, Baud, and Martínez have suggested: that there is neither a singular nor a simplistic way of approaching or understanding the relationship between Dominicans, Afro-migrants (particularly Haitians), and the conception of Dominican national identity.

For my analysis I use a concept that I refer to as fissures. I define fissures as openings or gaps in the principal ideological current of the text, regardless of whether that current aligns itself with discourses rejecting (as in the sugarcane cycle) or embracing (contemporary novels) foreign-born and local Afro-descendants and cultural traits as part of a Dominican imaginary. Fissures are the spaces where the representation of the Afro subject does not coincide with the way he or she is principally depicted in the text. The presence of such fissures suggests that a traditional and dichotomous way of thinking—such as belonging versus not belonging, or Dominican versus Haitian/Afro—is insufficient to explain the complexities of the gray zone between the two poles, the place where actual identity negotiations take place. In other words, as readers and critics, our analysis must go beyond what the black feminist bell hooks refers to as

“either/or dualistic thinking”, which is at the same time “the central ideological component of all systems of domination in Western society” (cited in Collins S19). These ideas were originally theorized as part of U.S. American Black Feminist thought, but—having developed out of a related context—are not limited to a strictly female and African American experience. Patricia Hill Collins refers to such “either/or dualistic thinking” as “the construct of dichotomous oppositional difference, ” which “may be a philosophical lynchpin in systems of race, class, and gender oppression.” As the scholar further asserts, “one fundamental characteristic of this construct is the categorization of people, things, and ideas in terms of their difference from one another.” In other words, “the terms in dichotomies [...] gain their meaning only in relation to their difference from their oppositional counterparts.” This is not a difference of equals, but rather involves “relationships of superiority and inferiority, hierarchical relationships that mesh with political economies of domination and subordination” (S20). Naturalizing the Haitian/Dominican dichotomy, as was done during Trujillo’s times, and treating the symbiotic ideological currents of anti-Haitianism and hispanophilia as the only explanatory variables of Dominican identity will only strengthen their currency, but also prevent us to move closer to an understanding of the real mediations that shape popular identity.

My approach then seeks to go beyond the traditional binaries that construct difference in order to establish and/or maintain systems of domination. It puts into question such “either/or dualistic thinking” by pointing to the simultaneous presence of ideological currents that, on the one hand, embrace precisely the dualistic model of anti-Haitianism (and hispanophilia), and on the other hand currents that belong to a more inclusionary vision of what constitutes Dominicaness, all within the same work. This type of method bears the potential to let us read the text from a place that is less tied to schematic and rigid categories, therefore less dependent

on the ideas that underlie the Western forms of domination that hooks is referring to, and that include the ideology built upon the concepts of anti-Haitianism and hispanophilia. The rejection of either/or models does not only refer to the ideological current present in the text, but also includes the interpretative work of ascribing ideological currents to a text. Rather than trying to make an argument that would associate the text exclusively with one or the other pole of the ideological spectrum, I am instead working to tease out the elements that link the way the Afro subject is represented within each work with the complicated, and often contradictory (if seen within a framework of dichotomous categories) negotiation of identity that occurs on the ground. I am not claiming that what we see in these novels is a representation of reality. However, the way in which different identification with/as and rejections of Afro-subjects are simultaneously present, can tell us something about the process of Dominican identity formation that is and has been ongoing for the past century. All of the authors that I look at move about somewhere between absolute rejection and absolute embracing of Afro subjects, neither text can escape either ideological current. As Samuel Martínez points out, in order to develop “new understandings of racism and national identity in the Dominican Republic” a factor that merits more attention is the “woefully incomplete knowledge of the dialectic of repulsion and fascination with which Dominicans regard Haitian culture, a dialectic of which anti-Haitianism is just one pole” (95). My study then presents a step into that direction, as the representation of the Afro subject in the chosen texts seeks to reveal snapshots of such a dialectic—albeit to varying degrees—over the past eighty years.

SUGARCANE NOVELS: TRUJILLO'S FIRST DECADE

The first half of this project focuses on three texts representative of the cycle of social-realist novels, generally referred to as *novela de la caña*: *Cañas y bueyes* (1936) by Francisco Eugenio Moscoso Puello, *Over* (1939) by Ramón Marrero Aristy, and *Jengibre* (1940) by Pedro Andrés Pérez Cabral. Besides the works that are subject of this analysis, there are at least two other novels that form part of this cycle: *Los enemigos de la tierra* (1936) by Andrés Francisco Requeña, and *El terrateniente* (1970) de Manuel Antonio Amiama. The latter—despite its late publication date—is included in Berta Graciano's *La novela de la caña* (1990). Even though *La Mañosa* (1936) by Juan Bosch was written during the same time period, while it is also situated in the rural areas, it does not engage directly with the sugar industry, but rather denounces the local system of *caudillos* and the political anarchy that caused death and destruction in the *campos*, particularly in the Cibao region. Their time of publication coincides with the first decade of Trujillo's rule, and hence with the consolidation of his power and doctrines. As I have mentioned before, part of this process was the institutionalization of anti-Haitianism—or the definition of *Dominicanness* as everything opposed to “Africanness” —as state ideology. The culmination of this process, and also an important point of reference in relation to the selection of these novels, was the massacre of 1937, also known as *El corte*, which resulted in the slaughtering of tens of thousands of Haitians, Dominican-Haitians, and those racially categorized as Haitians in the border region between the two nations of Hispaniola. As this analysis centers on the representation of the Afro subject within the texts, the fact that *Cañas y bueyes* was published before and *Over* and *Jengibre* after this significant event may reveal some interesting differences in the way they approach or give currency to the presence and treatment of black foreigners within the narration's world, as this group's literal eradication had just been at the

forefront of local politics. Furthermore, all three novels are set in an environment that deals directly with the sugar industry, where contact between Dominicans and Haitian and West Indian migrant workers was basically inevitable, therefore providing exactly the kind of narrative material this analysis seeks to evaluate.

My selection of these specific texts is also based on the question of what this analysis can contribute to the existing discussion. It is imperative to bear in mind that while *Cañas y bueyes* and *Over* have been fairly thoroughly studied—the latter more extensively than the former—*Jengibre* has been “largamente ignorado hasta por críticos dominicanos hasta el día de hoy” (Céspedes 19).¹⁷ This section’s first contribution is to put these better-studied texts in communication with one that has been virtually neglected by the critics, and to compare and contrast them along the lines of common themes related to the representation of the Afro subject. This may then, first of all, allow for an understudied text to receive some critical attention, and broaden our understanding of both this text as well as of the more canonical novels that belong to the Dominican sugarcane cycle of the fourth decade of the twentieth century. Secondly, as this chapter serves as a building block for the study of the representation of the Afro subject in more contemporary novels, the inclusion of both well and less well-known texts widens the spectrum of literary production under scrutiny, as it provides a more varied sample of texts. This, in turn, may thereby increase the explanatory potential of the analysis itself, especially when we consider the literary representation of the Afro subject to be a symptom of the level to which national identity propagated by the elites is engrained in society and reflected and reiterated in literary

¹⁷ Diógenes Céspedes and Norberto James are the two critics that have engaged with Pérez Cabral’s text, the former in the article that became the prologue to the edition I am using in this analysis, the latter in his doctoral thesis. Norberto James explains this neglect as a premeditated act of ignoring and silencing the text through omitting it from Dominican literary history and anthologies, all due to its critical approach and representation of the Trujillo regime (46-47).

works. The similarities as well as the differences will be more enlightening as they are drawn across a larger spectrum of texts.

From early on, Trujillo's totalitarian project strove to utilize art and literature as tools of indoctrination, as part of a general institutionalization of culture at the service of the regime (Álvarez 382). This translated into a significant increase of censorship and, at the same time, extremely limited opportunities for any kind of criticism or denunciation of the political and socio-economic realities of the time. However, for a number of reasons—among them an exposure to socialism, the nationalism in reaction to the North American occupation, and the system of power and exploitation linked to the booming sugar industry—the writers of the generation that produced the *novela de la caña* engaged with the theme of social inequality, particularly that caused by and explicitly found within the big sugar producing estates. Due to the fact that the cane cutting migrants generally were at the lowest echelons of society, and because of their condition as “black foreigners” and as unskilled workers, they suffered disproportionately from this inequality. I argue that while the authors do—in a general sense—critique and represent the injustices that include this particular group's experiences, and even denounce the overall misery that sugarworkers have to live in, they still represent the foreign Afro subject—Haitians and *cocolos*—as the Other, in ways that coincide with the main national ideology. While all—Dominican and foreign workers alike—suffer from extreme poverty and exploitation, the texts reiterate and reinscribe the sharp distinction that is made between local and foreign black subjects, largely without questioning or problematizing it. If we accept Di Pietro's thesis that the *batey* serves as a metaphor for the pyramidal state organization in the Dominican Republic under Trujillo (the critic argues that this is the case in *Over*, see page 184), the representation of the Afro subject within this body may then also be symbolic of the place this

very subject is afforded in the nation as a whole. Furthermore, and this is the central element of my discussion, I will point out some of the fissures and openings in these stereotypical depictions, which—while not yet impacting the main ideological undercurrent in a great way—may shed some light on the evolution of counter-discourses in later authors, as we will see in Chapters four and five of this analysis.

While one cannot expect to find a direct criticism of the regime's ideology and policies in these texts—particularly given the authoritatively controlled environment that tolerated absolutely no opposition—an argument can be made that these novels offer a potential space for the denunciation of the discrimination afforded to subjects considered to be black, particularly Haitian and West-Indian sugarcane workers. Especially *Over* and *Jengibre*, were they to live up to their image as anti-Trujillo texts—the former was pulled from the Dominican market a few days after its initial publication (Graciano 59), the latter was published in Caracas—carry the potential to provide a space to critically engage with the anti-Haitian or essentially anti-Afro construct of the dictator's ideological framework. However, after a first reading, the opposite seems to be the case. Despite their aim to criticize the status quo, these texts offer a space to reiterate the dominant ideology—for instance through a representation of the Afro foreign worker that reinforces some of the propagated stereotypes like uncivilized, ignorant, dirty—without questioning them or probing deeper into their roots. While this holds true for most of the text, a few narrative spaces may be highlighted where a potential criticism is uttered, and, more importantly, where the black migrant is represented in a manner that does not coincide with mainstream ideological discourse. As I have already pointed out, I refer to these spaces as *fissures* in my analysis.

The plots of the novels—which are summarized hereafter—exemplify this marginal position of the Afro subject in spatial and economic terms. Moscoso Puello's *Cañas y bueyes* depicts the changes that the Dominican countryside undergoes as a result of the sugar boom at the end of the 19th and the beginning of the 20th century. As the omniscient narrator recounts the transformation from local subsistence agriculture and cattle herding to extensive foreign-owned sugar plantations, the text focuses on representing the injustices that Dominicans of all strata suffer at the hands of the foreign proprietors of the *ingenios*. While some attention is drawn to the plight of the actual workers or peons—*carreteros*, *picadores* and others—particular credence is given to the misfortune of the tenant farmer—the *colono* Don Marcial—whose situation is even lamented by the workhands who are much worse off than he is. The text illustrates the sugar industry's dependence on West Indian and Haitian migrant laborers, but they nevertheless remain at the margins of the story.

Marrero Aristy's *Over* is a coming-of-age story, a sort of *Bildungsroman* with an unhappy ending. It is recounted by the first-person narrator and protagonist Daniel Comprés—disowned and rejected by his bourgeois family—who winds up having to make a living as a *bodeguero* in a sugar plantation owned and run by North American and European foreigners. He gets caught in the role of victim—subject to exploitation by his superiors—and of victimizer, forced to cheat his even poorer customers in order to subsist and maintain his job. It is from this position that he observes and judges the effects of the hierarchical organization of society on the locals, but particularly on the exploited sugar workers, and the divisions within this group between the poorest (mainly dark skinned) Dominicans, and “black” Haitian and West Indian migrants. Daniel's conscience and personal experience make him rebel, an act that will cost him

his job, and finally his marriage. He winds up leaving the *batey* and succumbing to alcohol, and exploiting another instead of providing for himself; by the end, he lives off a prostitute's income.

Out of the three novels, Pérez Cabral's *Jengibre*—written in exile—presents the most vehement criticism of the Trujillo regime, its repressive institutions (like the national guard), and the regime-backed North American-owned sugar industry responsible for the precarious situation of dependence and poverty that many of its workers find themselves in. The text opens with a somewhat conflictive dialogue between the mature Cipriano Benítez—firm opponent of the regime—and his best friend's son, Enerio García, who is about to join the National Guard. The anecdote develops around two main events. Juana, the daughter of the older protagonist, is sexually assaulted by her Spanish employer, and dies during an attempted abortion of their “bastard child”. Meanwhile, due to the miserable circumstances under which the inhabitants of the *batey* have to exist, continuously pushed to the edge of possible survival and deprived of not only their dignity, but also the most basic necessities, the workers organize a strike. The *Generalissimo* himself is supposed to visit the area, which propels events that lead to the death of all perceived opponents: on a personal level, the soldier Enerio “eliminates” Cipriano; and on a group level, the national guard crushes the sugar worker rebellion. West Indian and Haitian migrant workers play a somewhat significant role in this text, the former as organizers, and the latter as the ever-negative point of reference, particularly for the opponents of the regime.

In sum, all of these novels focus on the sugarcane industry's impact on the Dominican Republic's economy, and particularly on the life of the local citizens. The black subject—regardless whether inclusive or exclusive of the Afro-Dominican—is present in all three texts, and is looked upon with a certain amount of empathy for his or her precarious situation, but

nevertheless—with only a few exceptions—is represented from a perspective that situates him or her in an inferior position, a place where his agency is either non-existent or non-effective.

NATIONALISM, RURAL LIFE, AND THE AFRO SUBJECT PRIOR TO *LA NOVELA DE LA CAÑA*

In order to better be able to understand how the Afro subject is represented in these texts and beyond, I would like to review a few elements—including the theme of nationalism, the rural background, and the presence of the black subject—in Dominican literature prior to the emergence of the *novela de la caña*. As this analysis seeks to trace the evolution of such representation, it is necessary to shed some light on the origin of certain notions. This is by no means meant to be an exhaustive review of the literary developments prior to the publication of *Cañas y bueyes*, *Over* and *Jengibre*,¹⁸ but rather an intent to trace some of the pertinent trends that preceded their creation.

The US military occupation of the Dominican Republic (1916-24) brought about and intensified a nationalist and patriotic longing for sovereignty in a nation where *modernismo*—the first uniquely Latin American artistic movement- had arrived late, not until after 1900 (Álvarez 347). This anti-imperialist nationalism also found expression in contemporary literary production, as for example in Federico García Godoy's (1857-1924) novel *El derrumbe*

¹⁸ For a more exhaustive overview, please see Soledad Álvarez's "Un siglo de literatura dominicana: Modernismo, posmodernidad, libertad y vasallaje," or Miller et al, Volume VI of the series *Colección Pensamiento Dominicano*, titled *Novela*.

(1916),¹⁹ a text that rejected North American interference in the region and which, consequentially, was burned by the military occupation government. This patriotic feeling, however, did not cause a turning inward to engage with the “national being” and Dominican realities; rather it caused a type of nationalism that promoted the return to the Hispanic past, a sort of opposition to the growing US influence. This was, of course, a sentiment on which Trujillo’s ideology—particularly the complementary discourses of *anti-haitianismo* and *hispanofilia*—would be built. The production of the historical novel and *criollismo*—elements of traditional Dominican literature—peaked during this time. Simultaneously, theater also experienced a boom—albeit one that lasts only a few years. It seems interesting that Rafael Damirón introduced the peasant’s way of speaking and the lower-class environment to his plays around 1916 (Álvarez 368-69), since these are elements that we may also find in the social-realist sugarcane novels produced two decades later.

Of utter importance for all literary development in the twentieth century is the poetic movement of the *postumistas*, which saw its beginnings around 1921. These poets, in a very avant-garde like fashion, effectuated an encounter with the common man (Álvarez 376). Domingo Moreno Jimenes was the most prolific *postumista* poet, whose main preoccupation with the human existence led him to travel all over the Republic, to meet people of all walks of life, and the impressions of this lived experience is what his poetry reflects (Rueda 391; Miller “Poesía” 32). The critics’ evaluation of this poet’s contributions to the representation of the black subject in literature is varied. Dawn Stinchcomb, for example, claims that Moreno Jimenes belongs to the first Dominican authors of *poesía negroide*, and that the poems that engage with

¹⁹ Frederico García Godoy was known for producing nationalistic literary texts. Before the above mentioned novel, he already published a “trilogía patriótica”: *Rufinito* (1908), *Alma dominicana* (1911), and *Guanuma* (1914).

the black subject represent its characters in a superficial way, tending towards folklore and exoticism. José Alcántara Almánzar, citing the poem “El haitiano” (1927), claims that Moreno Jimenes actually “gives a new view of the Haitian man. He does not see the color of his skin but his moral values” (168). Citing the same poem as evidence of her thesis, Aída Heredia proposes yet a different interpretation. She argues that the poet, through an artificial relationship with his character, interprets the latter’s misery as humility, or “moral values.” Poverty is therefore idealized and presented as a moral choice. “La pobreza es negada como problema social y presentada como el ‘modo’ de vida que el personaje—dentro de su ignorancia congénita—escoge para sí” (90).

Rubén Suro, a Marxist-inspired poet who belonged to the group *Los Nuevos*—formed in 1936, and coined as a sort of continuation of the *postumistas* because of their emphasis in the working class experience and in social themes—progresses in his textual representation of the black subject. The 1934 poem “Rabiaca del haitiano que espanta un mosquito” renders a caricaturesque image of the Haitian, with a poetic voice that self-incriminates itself by claiming that a mosquito will be poisoned if it stings a black person, a fact that reveals “una plataforma para la bajeza percibida en el color negro y en los rasgos africanos con los que se les asocia [a los haitianos]” (Heredia 91). This poem also includes an imitation of the way Haitians speak, similar to the manner in which these subjects express themselves in the sugarcane novels. It then seems that the prevalent stereotypes that were used during *trujillismo* to characterize and otherize Haitians—a stand-in category for “black”—are present in the emerging poetry that depicts Afro subjects, written in the decade before and also contemporary to the first set of novels that are the subject of this analysis. On the one hand, this presents some of the possible literary influences in

our writers, and on the other hand it may also reveal something about the main mindset and mood of those engaged in the literary production of the period.

Let us now return briefly to Rubén Suro, and particularly to his poems “Al negro antillano, constructor de carreteras” (1935) and “Letanía del cañaveral” (1939), as the topics they treat and the way they represent the black subject may have some relevance for this analysis. Both texts are concerned with the exploitation of the black worker, the first in road construction and the second on the sugar plantation. Stinchcomb claims that in “Al negro antillano,” no distinction can be made between black Dominicans, Haitians, or West Indian *cocolos*: “it is often impossible to distinguish between the Haitian, *cocolo* or Dominican subject because there are no longer any linguistic clues” (46). As will be further analyzed later, the sugarcane novels *Cañas y bueyes*, *Over*, and *Jengibre* clearly show how all three groups of Afro subjects find themselves in the same indistinguishable situations of misery and exploitation, but in contrast to Suro’s poem, they are easily differentiated, partially due to a conscious authorial choice of including linguistic clues in the novels. The second poem by Suro carries a theme similar to that of the novels: it takes place in the environment of the sugarcane industry, and just like *Cañas y bueyes* and *Over* blames the foreign investors and owners of the plantations for the exploitation of the local worker, rather than addressing the local authorities who also are accomplices to and benefactors of this system.²⁰

²⁰ Manuel del Cabral is the most prolific *poesía negrista* artist, one who includes Dominican blacks, Haitians and West Indian *cocolo* immigrants in his poetry. Since most of these works were published after 1940, it is very unlikely that they would have influenced the novelists of the chapter on the sugarcane novel. What his works do show, however, is a consciousness of the misery that the Afro subject—for the first time seen as a human being—has to endure because of the social position assigned to him or her through the dominant anti-Afro and Hispanophile ideology.

In contrast to a fervent poetic production, during the first half of the twentieth century not a large number of significant novels were written until the sugarcane cycle. There are, however—besides the already mentioned *El derrumbe*—a few noteworthy early texts that I mention here, particularly because of the way in which they represent the black subject. Walter Cordero points out that in Francisco Gregorio Billini's *Baní o Engracia y Antonita* (1892) a single Black character exists, despite the fact that it was only published only a decade after *Enriquillo*, the novel that replaces Dominican African heritage with that of the already extinct *indio*. However, Billini's black character does not have a name, only a denigrating nickname "Musié." The discrimination he experiences from his own friends is expressed in a manner that reveals how their contempt is tied to a racism against the Haitian Other, and Musié's supposed connection with that Other because of his color: "Musié no podía negar que era un rayano de las líneas de Haití, hombre sin principio" (cited in Cordero 155). A representation of the black subject that defines the latter as not belonging to the Dominican realm is also present in Tulio Manuel Cestero's *La Sangre* (1913). The author "le asigna al personaje central categorías raciales inexistentes, para no definirlo como negro. Además, distribuye entre los negros la mayor parte de los defectos humanos conocidos" (Cordero 152). Billini's and Cestero's novels, just like the texts of this analysis, belong to what Diógenes Cespedes calls the "second cycle" of Dominican narrative (15). At least in terms of the representation of the foreign-ness of the Afro-subject within the Dominican Republic—conforming with national ideology—the sugarcane novels repeat some of the same biases of the "cycle" of earlier texts.

*****THE AFRO SUBJECT IN BROADER LITERARY TRENDS

Not only did local predecessors influence the emergence of the sugarcane novel. It is also necessary to situate these texts within the broader literary trends contemporary to their setting and publication. The heightened appearance of the black subject in the Dominican social realist novels of the later 1930s is not at all surprising, given the contemporary development in the arts. During the early twentieth century, black themes and subjects finally began to escape the veil of invisibility that had delegated them to the shadows of mainstream textual and artistic production. On the one hand, there was an explosion of interest in the African subject in the Europe of the early twentieth century, a type of cult of primitivism, focused on the exotic and savage nature of the African body and culture. We may think, for example, of Josephine Baker, the popularity of World Fairs exhibiting “primitive humans” in late 19th and early 20th century Europe, and the (white) North American and European upper class’s increased infatuation with black musical forms such as Blues and Jazz.

On the other hand, the 1920s gave birth to artistic movements such as the *Harlem Renaissance* in the United States,²¹ in turn inspiring the beginnings of the ideological and poetic movement of *négritude* initiated by the Martinican Aimé Césaire, both countering the Eurocentric primitivist vision of Afro culture and searching for ways to vindicate and reinvent its value.

In the neighboring Spanish-speaking islands, largely driven by the work of ethnologists—

²¹ In literary terms, the *Harlem Renaissance* resulted in a militant renunciation of a “white” culture perceived as being overly civilized and decadent, and led to a conscious embracing of an African “primitivism”—the *black soul*—that had preserved its native character and its spontaneity, an idea coined by W.E.B. DuBois in *The Souls of Black Folk* (1903) (Gewecke 187).

such as Fernando Ortiz—who studied African influences in the New World, a literary movement made up of mainly white intellectuals interested in Afro-Antillean folklore—like the Puerto Rican poet Luis Palés Matos—propelled the development of the *poesía negrista* (Depestre 11).²² In Cuba, writers such as Emilio Ballagas, José Zacarías Tallet, Ramón Guirao, and Nicolás Guillén developed a related style that was to become known as *afrocubanismo*. These poets looked to express what were regarded to be “typical” characteristics of the Afroamerican—nativeness, ferocity, sensuality—through the use of African rhythms and accentuations and onomatopoeic devices, a poetics that—with the exception of Guillén’s work—resulted in a stereotypical representation of the Afro subject, tending towards primitivism (Gewecke 190). Alejo Carpentier’s first novel *Ecue-Yamba-O* (1933) belongs to this current, a text that shares a number of interesting characteristics with at least two of the Dominican works discussed here (*Cañas y bueyes* and *Over*). The protagonist Menegildo Cué, an Afro subject, is represented through the perspective of an outsider, in a somewhat paternalistic manner; the narrator distances himself from his own compatriots. As in the Dominican texts, there is a nationalist project at the center of the text, one that vehemently rejects foreigners, Caribbean and North American alike. Against the first group—in the case of Carpentier’s text including Haitians and Jamaicans, in the Dominican text Haitians and West Indians from the lesser Antilles (the so-called *cocolos*)—this rejection is channeled through racist remarks, generally enunciated by some of the protagonists. Jerome Branche maintains that while the inclusion of the Afro subject in these movements carries a symbolic importance, it is nevertheless mitigated by the dominant classes and their

²² *Poesía negrista*, while searching for an aesthetic comprised of primary symbols associated with Africanness, such as animals, vodou, and drums, does not question the Spanish colonial legacy, while *négritude* entails a drive for emancipation and a rejection of colonialism, a search for a common black cultural identity (Branche “Negrista” 488).

interests. Rather than an equal and truly democratic inclusion of all races, it is driven by a concern for maintaining existing socio-political hierarchies (“Negrisimo” 483-84).

Besides a newly felt activism and presence of the black subject in the arts and on the socio-political scene, a number of other factors shaped the themes writers would choose. There was an exposure to socialist ideas, the experience of the Great Depression, as well as labor movements and unrest, for example by the sugar workers in a large number of the British Caribbean islands. All of these turned the working class’s plight and suffering into a theme for writers to engage with, not only in the Dominican Republic. The problematic addressed in these novels is not exclusive to Western Hispaniola, but rather a phenomenon that also concerns writers in other places in Latin America and in the Caribbean.

The social problem that the *novela de la caña* talks about, for instance, is similar to the theme of a group of Brazilian novelists—including José Lins do Rego and Jorge Amado—from 1930 on.²³ Pedro Henríquez Ureña describes it as follows: “No se limitan a la descripción de cómo viven y sufren los indios o los negros; trazan un vasto cuadro de los afanes del obrero en el Brasil, de cómo trabaja y ama, juega y muere en las plantaciones de café, cacao y algodón, en los ranchos de ganado, en los molinos de azúcar, en las minas, en los muelles y en los barcos, en los bajos fondos de las ciudades” (cited in Céspedes 21).

In the Anglo-Caribbean realm, C.L.R. James’s and Alfred Mendes’s “barrack yard stories” became popular in the 1930s. It was a sub-genre of social realist fiction about impoverished slum dwellers. In a similar fashion as the *novelas de la caña*, these texts depict these subjects’ reality including everyday misery, violence and sexuality, as well as their

²³ *Menino de engenho* (1932) and *Fogo Morto* (1943) by José Lins do Rego, Graciliano Ramos’ *São Bernardo* (1934), and Jorge Amado’s early novel *Terras do sem fim* (1942) figure among the Brazilian “sugarcane cycle.”

particular local vernacular and speech pattern. Despite the realistic depiction of the circumstances of their literary actors, “James and Mendes [...] respond ambivalently to their characters. They know well, and sympathize with, the impoverished barrack-yard dwellers, but they also recurrently distance themselves from them” (Arnold et al, 204). James’ *Minty Alley* (1936) is a great example of this:

Minty Alley is the story of Haynes, a young black, middle-class man who observes and becomes involved in the daily life of the ordinary people who live with him at 2 Minty Alley. James experiments with Haynes's perspective in order to expose the colonial relations that structure his consciousness. The other inhabitants of 2 Minty Alley include the city's porters, prostitutes, carter-men, washerwomen, and domestic servants who, unlike Haynes, were born into materially impoverished worlds from whose stultifying confines they actively seek escape. Indeed, *the barrack yards in which they are holed up bear traces of the garrisons on sugar-producing plantations*. James exposes Haynes's power to define and speak for his fellow boarders as an integral part of colonial domination, which James correlates with colonized people's inability to express their own subjectivity. (Pease, emphasis mine)

The positioning of those at the bottom strata of society as subjects without any real agency, deserving of empathy and needing to be spoken for parallels the dynamic we see in the Dominican narratives that are the subject of this analysis. A certain paternalism can be detected in such structure: a subject that needs to be advocated for, whose agency is nonexistent or insufficient.

This idea of paternalism—or speaking for the Other—also may point to some additional parallels with other narratives of the same time period, for example with Andean *indigenista* novels of social protest that were published during the 1930s. “Historically, paternalistic impulses which saw indigenous peoples as passive receivers of outsiders’ actions have been the driving force behind *indigenismo*” (Becker). Examples of these texts include Icaza Coronel’s *Huasipungo* (1934), and César Vallejo’s *El Tugsteno* (1931). The similarity with *Cañas y bueyes*, *Over* and *Jengibre* lies not so much in a glorification of the indigenous subject (as was the case with *Enriquillo* in 1882), but rather in the fact that the narrative voice does not enter into the Other’s world; as it maintains a somewhat distanced and socially elevated position of observation vis-à-vis the subaltern subject. The Indian is admired for his endurance given the way he is abused and exploited, particularly in light of the North Americans’ role, as is also the case with the local sugar workers in Moscoso Puello’s and in Marrero Arísty’s texts. One may therefore observe a similar textual treatment of the indigenous and the black subject, whose miserable position at the bottom of the social scale is acknowledged and—to a certain extent—even lamented. It is, however, at the same time reinforced through a representation that conforms with a national ideology that assigns this particular place at the lowest ranks to those that are deemed as the “Other,” and whose cheap labor is needed to preserve the status quo.

Jerome Branche, in his article titled “Negrismo: hibridez cultural, autoridad y la cuestión de la nación” explains the mindset of the times. He comments on a multi-ethnicity of authors that participate in the *negrismo* or *afrocubanismo* movements, and the paradox that while the number of actual Afro-writers in these movements is rather small, non-Afro poets are seen as perfectly capable of representing the Afro subject “from within” thanks to a historical process of harmonious cultural synthesis. This practice, according to the critic, reveals the intention of the

dominant class to speak for the Other, and stems from a process that seeks to renegotiate a new “consensus” about reality that maintains the status quo, the existing social hierarchies (484-85). The case of the Dominican sugarcane novels is somewhat related. The textual representation of Haitians and *cocolos* as Others because of their race, and the association between Other and Africanness that prevents Dominicans from acknowledging their own African heritage, places these authors “on the outside,” where they are not writing from the position of the Afro subject because they—ideologically—do not identify with this subject. They may express pity and empathy with the plight of the sugar workers, but, with few exceptions, at the same time embrace the idea of difference between Dominicans, Haitians and West Indians based on the construct of race—as is evidenced by manner of their textual representation. The same can be said about the way in which the novels reproduce the Eurocentric racial order and hierarchy as prescribed by the elites. Rather than being questioned, the dominant national ideological discourse is served that way; there is a lack of connecting socio-economic misery with national identity politics. The few exceptions to this “rule” and their function as fissures opening up a different type of perspective and dialogue about national identity construction will also form an essential part of my discussion.

SHIFTING PARADIGMS: PAVING THE WAY FOR NEW AFRO-CARIBBEAN PERSPECTIVES

As I have already explained, literary production in the Dominican Republic from the early 1940s until Trujillo’s death was plagued by intensive censorship and brutal oppression of voices perceived as threatening to the regime. In other words, very little opportunities existed to publish

and widely distribute texts countering the official anti-Afro ideology. The few that did succeed at doing so were dedicated to the genre of poetry, among them Manuel del Cabral, who according to Álvarez counts as the “autor de los mejores poemas negros de la literatura dominicana” (404), and who identifies himself—together with Nicolás Guillén and Luis Palés Matos—as the founder of “la Poesía Negra” (Matibag 172). Those who tried their luck at subversive narrative were often not so lucky, and were eliminated by the regime, like Andrés Requeña or *Over*’s author Ramón Marrero Aristy. It has to be acknowledged, however, that while the country was immersed in a political and social environment motivated by extremely repressive anti-Haitian and anti-Afro ideology, in the rest of the world many political and cultural changes were happening that would greatly affect Afro Caribbean identity all over, including in the eastern part of Hispaniola. Before moving on the analysis of Avelino Stanley’s and Manuel Matos Moquete’s novels, I would like to briefly survey of some of the currents and events that have influenced and made it possible for such writers to embrace a more Afro-inclusive vision in their work.

In the 1940s and 1950s, Cuban intellectuals such as Lydia Cabrera, as well as the already mentioned Alejo Carpentier and Fernando Ortiz,²⁴ continued to further attempt to define and articulate the representation of Africa in the Caribbean. Carpentier’s novel *El reino de este mundo* (1949), for example, “offers a new and different historical gaze for the forties and fifties, in which the agency of an African creole consciousness disrupts the hegemony of Western

²⁴ In *Contrapunteo cubano del tabaco y el azúcar* (1940) Fernando Ortiz coined the idea of “transculturation” to describe cultural exchange and negotiation as it took place in the Caribbean. It is a replacement of the idea of acculturation, which suggested the absorption and disappearance of a weaker culture into the dominant culture, in a sense an eliminatory process detrimental to the former. Transculturation, on the other hand, is the creation of a completely new culture through the fusion and intermingling of cultures, a mutation that modifies all of the interacting parts. It results in a new and original phenomenon.

colonial dominance” (Cuervo Hewitt 26).²⁵ At the same time, such intellectuals and revolutionaries as Aimé Césaire’s student Frantz Fanon published important works that look to creolization and hybridity as a type of counter-hegemonic opposition to colonial practices, moving away from solutions of assimilation to the white-supremacist mainstream, on the one hand, or of reactionary philosophies of black superiority prominent in earlier decades, on the other. In all of his works, Fanon dissects the racist and colonizing project of white European culture, “that is, the totalizing hierarchical worldview that needs to set up the black human being as ‘negro’ so it has an ‘other’ against which to define itself” (Nicholls). Fanon calls for the necessity to develop a new conscience within the Afro community—one where black individuals do not have to filter their value judgments through white norms—as the key to shake off psychological colonization. Without this, he argues, physical decolonization will be ineffective.

During this time in the Dominican Republic, very few writers were engaging in Afro-affirmative literary production. Among those that did were the poets Juan Sánchez Lamouth, son of a *cocolo* family, and Jacques Viau Renaud, a Haitian migrant. It is interesting to note that they both belonged to ethnic groups that, within the Dominican national imaginary, already counted as outsiders and as the embodiment of African descent. They confront blackness as a source of marginalization and discrimination, yet in the sense of lament rather than an affirmation of identity.²⁶

²⁵ As Julia Cuervo Hewitt rightly points out, this novel “also represent[s] the contradictions and internal conflicts that went into the representation of Afro-Caribbeanness by white Spanish Caribbean writers in the early part of the twentieth century” (26). For a closer explanation of this argument and the intellectual construction of the Haitian slave in Carpentier’s novel, please see Chapter One of *Voices Out of Africa* (2009).

²⁶ For an in-depth discussion of these two authors and their poetic production, please see Dawn Stinchcomb’s chapter titled “Haitians, *Cocolos*, and African Americans” in *The Development of Literary Blackness in the Dominican Republic* (2004).

Around the world, the physical decolonization process went hand in hand with the call for a shift in mindset by black intellectuals. In the 1950s and 60s, the French colonies in northern Africa and the Anglo-Caribbean islands finally reached independence from their European metropolises. In the United States, the “Turbulent Sixties” were in full bloom, reinvigorating slogans such as “Black is Beautiful” (coined by Brazil’s Abdias do Nascimento in the 1940s) and culminating in the passing of the Civil Rights Act in 1964 and the Voting Rights Act in 1965, ending *official* segregation and discrimination based on race and ethnicity. Meanwhile, the Cuban Revolution—with the ascension of Fidel Castro to power in 1959—carried the promise of equal access to education, healthcare, and opportunities for everyone. While it is difficult to exactly measure the success of these reformation processes—as racial discrimination continues to exist today—it is clear that the environment and the mood of this era of promise was powerful enough to produce a paradigm shift in the way that Afro-descendants identified and viewed themselves everywhere, and in the ways that they asserted this new identity.

It is clear that the cultural productions of the era also reflected such a shift. Afro identity was asserted in movements such as Rastafarianism, and in the creation and increased popularity of musical genres such as reggae and salsa. The Afro subject was also represented much more affirmatively in literature. The 1960s were a special moment for black consciousness as the impetus of Afro-descendants to protest finally successfully materialized in legal changes. Afro-Hispanic literature, with a newfound self-confidence, was blossoming in many different places in Latin America, searching for roots and identity that had for so long been reduced to invisibility or to schematic cultural archetypes. From this moment on, and over the next few decades, writers such as Manuel Zapata Olivella, Carlos Guillermo Wilson (“Cubena”) and Quince Duncan wrote about the neglect of the black subject’s role in the history and culture of their nations and about

African identity. As part of racist and invisibilizing practices, black history and the contributions of slaves and their descendants were often forgotten until this point, and now became part of a discourse that was seeking to affirm and resurrect them, and at the same time usurp and deconstruct negative stereotypes, for example through the appropriation of language (one may think, for example, of the title *Chombo* for Cubena's best-known novel). An enlarged and affirmative presence of Afro-descendants—not only as subjects of literary production but also as writers and intellectuals—not only implied greater visibility, but by definition also greater power, for example in (re) defining the literary canon (Jackson 25).

These developments, including the self-affirmative appropriation of an African identity by some authors, were partially mirrored in Dominican literature, even though the barriers to such expression were rather high due to a hostile ideological environment. There was a short-lived ideological opening after Trujillo's death, prompting new directions. During this time, poets such as Aída Cartagena Portalatín and Manuel Rueda—who would come to engage with topics related to the Haitian-Dominican relationship, the border between the two countries, and the black experience on the island—saw the initiation of writers such as Máximo Avilés Blonda or the enigmatic Marcio Veloz Maggiolo, whose work over more than the next half century would continuously engage with similar questions. Because of his extensive trajectory addressing and representing issues related to the complex relationship between Haitians and Dominicans cohabitating in *Quisqueya*, Veloz Maggiolo most definitely counts as an influence as well as a peer for Stanley and Matos Moquete.

Sybille Fischer calls attention to the fact that even as far back as during and after the Haitian occupation there appears to have been some pro-Haitian writing by members of the

Dominican elite who chose to stay on the island. These texts became an embarrassment for later Dominican critics, and little is known about them (181). One of the examples is Pedro Francisco

Bonó: *El montero* (1856), a novel that is much closer to Domingo Faustino Sarmiento's *Facundo* (1845), Cirilo Villaverde's *Cecilia Valdes* (1839/1888), and Jorge Isaacs's *María* (1967), than to Dominican literary practices (194). The Dominican critic and writer José Alcántara Almánzar is the only one that mentions Bonó's novel in *Dos siglos de literatura dominicana*, where he recognizes the Haitian role as a reformer in the Dominican Republic, rather than as a descent into barbarity and bestiality (195). Bonó could then be counted as one of early intellectuals engaged in a project of re-writing current and past history related to Afro migrants in the Dominican Republic, a project reflected in Stanley and Matos Moquete's work.

The anti-Haitian and anti-Afro ideology, however, continued to exert considerable influence over the way Dominican national identity would be defined during most of the second half of the twentieth century. This was in great part due to the discourse continually advertised by intellectuals and politicians such as the aforementioned Joaquín Balaguer, one of Trujillo's cronies who held the position of president of the Dominican Republic—albeit not consecutively—during three decades following the return to democracy. He represents the dynamic essence of what would continue to be the prominent ideology in the country. In an excerpt from his notorious work *La isla al revés* (1983), cited earlier in this analysis, he reinterprets Dominican history as essentially Hispanic, and he describes Haiti (and in essence blackness) as the biggest threat to the Dominican Republic and its social, racial, and cultural integrity.

But despite an adverse ideological environment, and a continued racialized concept of nationalism that rejected African descent as part of Dominican identity, an Afro-Hispanic literary

undercurrent developed, even though it was smaller and very little acknowledged by Dominican intellectuals (Stinchcomb 86). Norberto James Rawlings' work is an example of the literary expression of Afro migrants and their descendants. As a descendant of *cocolos*, he affirms their contribution to the nation's modernization and wealth—through their work on the sugar plantations and in railroad construction—while at the same time lamenting the injustice, discrimination, and alienation they had to experience as migrants. However, James Rawlings's poetry does not, as does *Tiempo muerto*, directly engage with and (partially) affirm blackness. Rather, and in this sense Stanley's and James Rawlings's work are similar, the *cocolo* is represented as an ethnic minority that has been able to integrate, to become Dominican, while preserving some distinct cultural traits (Stinchcomb 84).

As I have mentioned on various occasions, the question of Afro migrants in the Dominican Republic is intrinsically linked to that of Afro Dominicans and the affirmation of their identity. In an environment that essentially rejected the notion of African heritage by projecting it to a space outside of the national imaginary, the affirmation and voice of those who self-identify and affirm Afro identity is especially significant in terms of creating a counter-discourse. This is particularly true when we look towards later projects seeking to represent Afro-inclusive visions of Dominicaness, such as Stanley's and Matos Moquete's texts. One of the most vocal voices affirming Afro-Dominican identity is Blas Jiménez, whose poetry "recalls the strong black consciousness literature of the 1940s," for example by the Afro-Colombian poet Jorge Artel (Jackson 25). In contrast to James Rawlings, Jiménez directly embraces and advocates for black Caribbean, and particularly black Dominican, identity; highlighting the history, contributions, and integral belonging of Afro-descendants to the nation and the region,

while interrogating and subverting the essentialist Europeanization of Dominicaness through ideological discourse.

It is interesting to note that since Viau Renaud, no other Dominican author has claimed Haitian heritage, including those who write about themes related to Haitians. Yet, one potentially great influence on the development of writers such as Stanley and Matos Moquete comes from the Western part of Hispaniola. René Depestre can be seen as a counter-discursive figure from Haiti. Despite coming from a fairly affluent background, from early on he sympathized with ordinary workers, and spent many years in exile in Cuba. As an upper-class intellectual, he embodies and represents the opposite of the typical image of the Haitian as a *bracero*. At the same time, as a writer, he celebrates the laborer and the formerly enslaved. He represents a Caribbeanist voice from the standpoint of the racialized underclass. In contrast to Jiménez, Depestre does not subscribe to singular and essentialist racial identities, but rather advocates for the embracing of multiple roots and subjectivities (Sagástegui).

RECENT NOVELS: NEW APPROACHES

As we have seen, particularly since the 1960s, intellectuals have been looking to rewrite historical identity in the Caribbean region, embracing their past, resurrecting their ancestry, and subverting a national discourse that fails to embrace the Afro subject as an integral and valuable part of society. The currents, directions, and writers that I have briefly discussed here have had a distinctive role in paving the way for the later works that form part of this analysis.

The second part of this project includes an analysis of two novels written much more recently, *Tiempo muerto* (1997) by Avelino Stanley,²⁷ and *La avalancha: leyenda negra* (2006) by Manuel Matos Moquete. This selection is based on a number of factors, of which the first one is related to the socio-historical realities surrounding the production of the texts. I chose the time periods in recent Dominican history that promised the greatest potential to be the strongest and weakest points—respectively—of anti-Haitian ideology.²⁸ The first decade of Trujillo's reign, as I have already explained earlier, was a time when the anti-Afro ideology that forms the base for this analysis was ubiquitous, and culminated in the 1937 massacre. At the same time, the political censorship of cultural productions was augmenting steadily but had not yet reached the

²⁷ This is not to be confused with another novel with the same title by the Cuban Francisco García Moreira. This *Tiempo muerto* was published a decade after the onset of the Cuban Revolution. It starts out very similar to the sugarcane novels, and only mentions the plight of Afro subjects (but always as the dilemma of Others) a couple of times at the beginning of the text, which is situated in the early 20th century. Later on in the narrative, this question does not come up again, the text becoming a piece of socialist propaganda where the future is painted in bright colors thanks to the revolution and its achievements, highlighting the poor worker's part in the reaching of these goals.

García Moreira's novel is, in a sense, reminiscent of *Jengibre*, that followed a strictly Marxist-proletarian line, and it also subscribes to the idea of racial harmony that existed in revolutionary Cuba, by not making any references at all to the question of racial discrimination, or discrimination based on nationality or ethnicity. Rather, it strictly focuses on questions of class that were pertinent to the contemporary ideology.

It is possible that Avelino Stanley was familiar with this text, as he chose the same title for his own novel. However, besides the already familiar first-person narration of the realities surrounding the life of a sugar worker on the plantation in the character *Papabuelo*'s musings — also reminiscent of *Over-* there are not many similarities between the two works. The same title seems more of a coincidence to me, since the term *tiempo muerto* was very commonly used to describe the time between harvests, and it serves Stanley as an allegory for the absence and now resurrection of this subject absent and invisible from Dominican History.

²⁸ Whether one can ever speak of a “weak point” of anti-Haitian doctrine in recent Dominican history is questionable, particularly in light of such events as last year's TC 168-13 decision to de-nationalize hundreds of thousands of Dominicans of Haitians descent. What I am referring to, rather, is permissiveness of the political environment (censorship, oppression, propaganda and officially pronounced state ideology) to allow for manifestations of more Afro-inclusive identity, and for acts of inclusion and solidarity.

levels it would during the later years of the dictatorship, when any type of text that seemed even slightly critical of the regime was not only very unlikely to be published, but also potentially made his or her author a target of the dictator's suppressive apparatus. It therefore provided the kind of environment that was dominated by the ideological underpinnings that shunned Haitians and those considered to be like Haitians, but left some intellectual "wiggle room" for the kind of criticism that rather than open and direct would be creative and implied. In almost perfect contrast, the second time period I have selected, covering the late 1990s and the first decade of the new millennium, saw the end of the Balaguer era, and should technically have been an environment that provided greater intellectual and creative freedom and room for voices dissident to the mainstream ideology that still has a strong presence until today (as recent events undoubtedly affirm).

There are a number of additional reasons for my choice of two sets of novels with such a large temporal gap between the times of their publication. Between the early 1940s and the dictator's death in 1961, two of the most important Dominican poetic movements of the twentieth century formed—the *Poesía Sorprendida* in the 1940s and the *Generación del 48* during the following decade. The former was shut down by the regime after six years, and the latter used techniques such as a hermetic language filled with symbols of silence, death, and injustice (Álvarez 410), in order to denounce the dictatorship at the height of its oppressive activities. However, the same cannot be said for the genre that is the subject of my analysis: little noteworthy narrative, particularly with the potential to criticize anti-Haitian and anti-Afro ideology, was published during that time.

After the dictator was assassinated, literary production—as is to be expected—exploded. However, much of the narrative published during the years and decades following the end of

Trujillo's dictatorship has already received significant critical attention, most recently by such scholars as Soledad Álvarez, Rita De Maeseneer, Pura Emeterio Rondón, Fernando Valerio-Holguín, Dawn Stinchcomb, Silvio Torres-Saillant, Danny Méndez, the late Frauke Gewecke, and Maja Horn, among others.

In this study, I am trying to establish possible connections between the manifestations of pro- and anti-Afro ideologies during two different political climates, many decades apart. For that reason, current texts had more prevalence for this second part of the project. For my analysis, I purposefully selected texts that were recent but not brand-new, in order to work with novels that have had some time to be distributed around, to become established, and to receive critical attention. The texts I have chosen, however, are not among those that have been intensively studied. For instance, it was initially my intention to include *El hombre del acordeón* (2003) de Marcio Veloz Maggiolo in this section, in order to analyze three recent novels. Veloz Maggiolo's text has received ample critical attention, much more so than both *Tiempo muerto* and *Avalancha*, and was going to be representative of that side of the spectrum of scholarly attention, like *Over* among the sugarcane novels. However, I finally decided to leave this text out of the analysis, because unlike *Over*, which thematically fits perfectly with the two texts it is paired with, *El hombre del acordeón* relates to the frontier zone between Haiti and the Dominican Republic, a space that is historically and culturally very different from the way that either country and people define themselves (see Victoriano-Martínez's *Rayanos y Dominicanyorks: la dominicanidad del siglo XXI* for an intriguing exploration of the topic). All texts of my project, however, are centered on a labor-related space within the Dominican Republic that was populated by migrants in search of making a living (the sugar estate, or the *Pequeño Haití* neighborhood in Santo Domingo). Consequentially, the interactions with local

Dominicans were the result of these migrations, and not of a geographical and cultural space shared over the course of centuries, as is the case with the *rayanos* in Velóz Maggiolo's text.

The significantly smaller amount of critical attention—in comparison—given to *Tiempo muerto* and *La avalancha* may be related to the subject matter, or to the paucity of texts regarding the subject matter: according to Stanley, by the year 2009 few novels had been written that include the Haitian topic, and even less concerning or even tangentially touching the *cocolo* (*Novela...* 290-97). As in the chapters concerning the sugar-cane novels, I have chosen a balance between a work that has been the object of at least some noteworthy criticism and even received the national *Premio de la novela* in 1997 (*Tiempo muerto*), and another text—*La Avalancha*—that has been virtually neglected by critics within and outside of the island. This difference in attention is particularly puzzling considering that both novels were written by scholars who are rather well-known within the Dominican literary establishment. Both are currently active members of the intellectual community.²⁹ In the final chapter of this project—dedicated to the in-depth analysis of Matos Moquete's text—I will attempt to shed some light on possible reasons for this silence by the critics.

Finally, another reason to include *Tiempo muerto* and *La avalancha* is that they help illustrate the shift from the *batey* environment (which still exists as a place where Afro migrant workers and their descendants are concentrated, but is no longer the only center for that sector of the Dominican population) to urban locales. The novels thereby reflect current socio-economic realities by calling attention to the fact that migrant workers and their descendants form an active and visible part of the urban enclave (according to Amnesty International, over the past twenty

²⁹ In 2014, for example, both participated in the selection of the winner of the *Premio Internacional Miguel Cocco Guerrero*, Matos Moquete as member of the jury and Stanley as Executive Director of the prize (Guaroa Ubiñas).

years or so, a shift has occurred in that many migrants are now to be found in these urban locales, as construction workers, housekeepers, and other participants in the informal economy). Whereas in the sugarcane novels the city played no role whatsoever, its importance in these recent novels is readily discernible. While most of the action in *Tiempo muerto* still takes place in the *batey*, a connection with the urban space of Santo Domingo is established on numerous occasions through its role as the workplace of some of the characters, or as the only locale where certain essential transactions and services may be obtained (medicine, visa etc.). In regards to *La avalancha*, as Julia Borst rightly points out, the text occupies a special position among contemporary Dominican literary works, in that it directly address the migration problematic, and in the fact that it is not constructed around the events of 1937, but rather engages head-on with today's urban environment.

Most scholars of Dominican literature and culture would agree that ideologically, Stanley as well as Matos Moquete belongs to the same group as Andrés L. Mateo, Carlos Estaban Deive, and Marcio Veloz Maggiolo, “cuya obra es un testimonio de la voluntad de destrujillización del pensamiento dominicano y un homenaje a los valores de la diversidad y la tolerancia” (Cabiya xix). Thus, their ideological agenda clearly opposes such nationalistic discourse based upon a clear opposition to all things Haitian, and a negation and oppression of Afro culture and heritage. The ideological undercurrent of *Tiempo muerto* and *La avalancha* could then generally be described as one that should foster an idea of Dominicanness as being Afro-inclusive, as welcoming diversity as part of what constitutes Dominican national identity, and as one that propagates tolerance and peaceful co-existence of different ethnicities in the same space. Both texts, in a general sense, also suggest that a shared history, and cohabitation in the same space, necessarily bring about intermingling and transculturation (see note 24 for a definition of this

term). Consequentially, in both *Tiempo muerto* and *Avalancha*, any elements in the representation of the Afro subject that would coincide with or repeat the stereotypes propagated by Trujillista ideological discourse would then constitute what I have referred to as *fissures* in the first section of this analysis —such as depictions denigrating Haitian and other Afro characters, a definition of Dominicaness as an opposition to and rejection of all African roots, or a national identity based on Catholic and Hispanic/white ideals, to cite a few possible examples. In other words, such elements would suggest gaps in the overall ideological fabric of the texts. Once again, the presence of such an ideological ambivalence regarding the positioning of the Afro subject in the national Dominican arena may suggest something about the level of perseverance and internalization of certain anti-Afro discourses within Dominican society even today, including in those who advocate for the overcoming of these tendencies. It may also help expose some of the nuances of interplay between the intended ideological direction of a literary work, and the writer's subjective ideological reality that is revealed in its pages.

At this point, it is essential to return to the question of the critical reception of these novels, and to briefly address what other scholars have said about the five texts that form part of this analysis. In *Cañas y bueyes*, in *Over*, as well as in *Jengibre*, some critics have discussed the question of the treatment of the Afro subject, but it is generally focused on the Haitian. It is of great interest to this analysis that the scholars have not engaged in a profound analysis of the difference of representation of the Haitian, West Indian *cocolo* and the Afro-Dominican, if the Dominican is acknowledged to be of African descent. The differences and similarities in the textual treatment of these subjects, however, could reveal more about the constructed nature of the Afro subject as the Other, and about how the anti-Afro ideology is communicated in the novels. The sort of differentiation in the representation of the different subjects reveal how they

are constructed in relation to the ideal Dominican man—white, Hispanic, Catholic—and how this differentiation is necessary for upholding the dominant discourse of such Dominicanness, which can only exist and define itself through the opposition of what it is not, or its opposite. The representation of the Afro subject as backwards and black completes the binary that frames the white man—as whom the Dominican strives to self-identify—as the universal and normative (Fanon 355). Differentiations made between black subjects of different nationalities in the text would seem to complicate this notion at first sight. This type of opening —despite its limited presence—will certainly be discussed in the analysis, as it may be suggestive particularly if we keep in mind what Samuel Martínez has argued about the complexity of racial relations in the Dominican Republic, and by extension about the formation of a national identity. At the same time, I will argue that this type of differentiation between West Indians and the inhabitants of Western Hispaniola also serves to reveal how deeply engrained the elite-inspired construction of contempt for the Haitian subject—as a trope of blackness—is. Furthermore, I point out how because of the colonial model, an (imagined) proximity of the *cocolos* to the “civilized” center—also the supposed dwelling place of the true Dominican—diminishes the perception of difference and leads to a less severe form of disdain towards the West Indian subject. In other words, while the *cocolo* certainly experiences severe discrimination as a black migrant, the way he or she is represented suggests that he or she is held in a higher regard than the Haitian (through the way the narrator represents him or her, the way he or she speaks, the position he or she holds within the sugar estate). This question will then form part of this analysis, and thereby contribute to the ongoing discussion in a meaningful way.

SELECTED CRITICAL RECEPTIONS

Let me now concisely review some of the scholarly contributions about the five novels that form part of this analysis, in order to have a point of departure and a basis for establishing a dialogue with some of the already established criticism on the novels.

José Alcántara Almánzar qualifies *Cañas y bueyes* as a work that points to the dependence of the sugar industry on Haitian and West Indian *cocolo* workers, but without really criticizing the way that these individuals are treated by their Dominican counterparts. The true objective of the novel, according to the critic, is a defense of the *colono*, or tenant farmer, as the scholar expresses here:

Aunque de indudable importancia en el proceso, los inmigrantes cocos y haitianos permanecen al margen en el relato. A veces el autor introduce una nota sobre el prejuicio racial o la actitud del trabajador dominicano frente a los picadores haitianos, sin embargo, su drama no nos conmueve porque el autor no ahonda en el asunto. Su objetivo en esta obra no es el peón agrícola, y mucho menos el de origen extranjero. La obra de Moscoso Puello propone, en primer término, una defensa del colono, siempre acorralado por la Compañía. (Narrativa y sociedad 55)

Berta Graciano follows Alcántara Almánzar's argument and expands on it. She draws attention to the two perspectives from which the foreign cane cutters are perceived in the text. The North American business owner or manager views them as cheap and unproblematic laborers, where the Dominican workers look at them as inferior and despicable beings (36-37). The critic also mentions that the *cocolos* are generally more accepted than the Haitians, but does not go much further with this statement. She claims that the racial conflict on the island in general terms—not limited to that between Dominicans and dark-skinned foreigners—is one of the most subtle

themes of the novel. Graciano asserts that in *Cañas y bueyes*, despite the self-recognition of Dominicans as a racial mixture —like the one that may be pronounced by the character Don José (Moscoso Puello 19)—Dominican identity tends toward an association with the white race and contempt for the black one (42).

Danny Méndez proposes a rather different take on the novel in his article “Bittersweet affections.” The critic puts forth an argument that at the center of *Cañas y bueyes* lies a criticism against the Dominicans themselves and against their admiration for the whites (who are destroying their land). He also advances a notion that the relationship between Dominicans and Haitians is not one of uniform hostility, and that the antagonism between black migrant workers and locals is not a natural phenomenon as has been described by other critics, such as Michele Wucker in *Why the Cocks Fight* (2000). Rather, argues Méndez, the hate that is expressed towards Haitian characters “is more indicative of a sense of self-hate, frustration, and hopelessness that Dominicans themselves are experiencing at this time” (113). According to Méndez, we should view the relationship between the two groups as complex and messy, and he asserts that Moscoso Puello’s novel depicts it in this way. This is a very interesting point of departure for my analysis, very much in line with what recent critics such as April J. Mayes have suggested: to move away from a simplified binary of an antagonistic Dominican/Haitian relationship. Rather, more complex models of interaction may provide greater explanatory power when we attempt to understand Dominican racial and ideological realities, and their roots. My analysis essentially follows such a line of thought, but in contrast with Méndez, it is not limited to Haitians but rather also includes the West Indian *cocolo*.

Berta Graciano reiterates her argument about white supremacy when she talks about *Over*; she contends that this novel is informed by the same dynamic. Graciano explains that, in a

similar fashion to that employed in Moscoso Puello's novel, in Marrero Aristy's text the Haitian is considered an inferior individual, responsible for the precarious situation in the local labor market and consequentially for the Dominicans' struggle with unemployment (73). In her analysis, the *cocolos* are not separately mentioned but it is insinuated that they form part of the mass of undesirable black foreigners. This group at the bottom sector of the national economy shares the blame with another group of foreigners at the other end of the socio-economic spectrum—the white foreigners at the top, administrators and investors, mostly of North American origin (one of these characters in the novel is German), who are the direct benefactors from the exploitation of everyone below. The local population, then, finds itself “trapped” in between these two groups, threatened from above and from below. There is, however, a significant difference between the type of threat emanating from each sector. While the group from below is to be eliminated and rejected at all costs, the group from above is to be emulated and aspired to. While the North Americans and Europeans are rejected and criticized in the moment that the locals dependent on them and are subject to the exploitation propagated by those belonging to the elite, at the same time they represent the standard all aspire to reach. Daniel—the protagonist of the novel, who as a Dominican *bodeguero*³⁰ occupies one of an intermediary positions—is a great example of this mechanism. While he is often enraged about the mistreatment he experiences by his superiors, at the same time—as Graciano points out—he compares himself not with the workers—Dominicans, Haitians, and West Indian *cocolos*—that surround him, but rather with those who belong to a much higher socio-economic level, such as the administrators and investors (75). This reflects the bourgeois ideological structure that

³⁰ A *bodeguero* is the person who runs one of the small company stores on the sugar estate, the only place where workers can exchange the vouchers they are paid with for groceries and other goods.

informs Daniel's way of thinking, one that is anchored in a colonial past where the spectrum of socio-economic standing was clearly racially structured from top (white) to bottom (black).³¹ On this scale, Daniel positions himself much closer to the top than the bottom (despite the fact that economically speaking, he belonged much closer to the bottom), which in turn reveals how he subscribes to the dominant ideology of his time, one that follows a discourse of Dominican superiority anchored in a white-hispanic self-identity.

Doris Sommer's analysis of *Over* also moves along the same lines. The critic argues that the novel "continually points to the virtually necessary relationship between economic exploitation and racism in the Americas" (*One Master* 125) and most interestingly, to how the responsibility for this racist exploitation is mostly displaced from the local elites and local structures to the North American sugar magnates. In the text, rather than being a locally existing social phenomenon, the existing racist attitudes are portrayed as if they were an imposition by the sugar company. This includes the narrator's own prejudices, which become evident in his descriptions of the Haitians as an "undistinguishable crowd" in contrast to *cocolos* and Dominicans individuals (*One Master* 146). (Sommer does not probe deeper into these differences, but my analysis seeks to help fill that void). Through the displacement described above, Trujillo is eliminated from the narrative (one of the obvious reasons for this is, naturally, the threat of censorship and punishment at the time of the novel's publication). This act of supplanting in turn absolves the dictator—and by extension the Dominican nation for which he is a symbol—from any guilt in relation to existing racist practices and economic realities (*One*

³¹ Anibal Quijano's explanation of the linkage between racist social identities and the distribution of labor, originating in colonial times and repeated in today's capitalist world—the coloniality of power that is still based on the inferiority of races—further explicates the origins and persistence of this structure (534-38).

Master 126). What is particularly captivating about Sommer's analysis, however, is the observation that the novel subtly undermines or complicates its own charge against the racist "Yankee" exploitation, by pointing out that the practices of the North Americans were similar—only less overt—to those of the slaveholders in the past (*One Master* 142): "Y el blanco, cuya vida holgada jamás sufre cambios, al contemplar las recién llegadas manadas de negros, experimenta el placer que un día embragió el alma de su abuelo, mientras flagelaba las espaldas del africano que compró en el mercado" (Marrero Aristy 82). This reference could relate to the North Americans' ancestors, but may just as well be directed at the slaveholding ancestors of the Dominican elites. This may then be one of the few parts of the text where we may see an intended criticism of the preservation of a racist socio-economic structure internal to the Dominican Republic and serving elite interests.

Let us return briefly to Alcántara Almanzar, who—in agreement with Héctor Incháustegui Cabral—describes *Over* as a novel of protest and denunciation, one that represents the sugar estate like a Nazi concentration camp where the perpetrators are the managers and everyone else is a prisoner, a victim of exploitation (56). As a response to this argument one could say that yes, a denunciation is present, a criticism of the company that exploits all of its workers in general. However, the discrimination that is experienced by the black foreign subject—including the discrimination that is perpetrated by Dominican workers against the former—while represented in the text, is not condemned, is not problematized. No remedy or solution to that particular situation is sought or offered, making this type of denunciation incomplete.

Another critic, Eugenio Matibag, would disagree with this statement. He argues that *Over* forms part of a body of works—all written between 1935 and 1968—that belong to a category of literature that, in 1977, Marcio Veloz Maggiolo refers to as a "Literature of the Haitian

integrated” (cited in Matibag 166). These texts, claims Matibag, represent the Haitian not as a vilified or rejected creature, but rather as a human being who, in a way, is not so different from Dominicans. In Marrero’s Aristy’s novel, the critic argues, compassion is expressed for the Haitian cane cutter, and the denunciation of violence and exploitation against the estate workers includes Dominicans and Haitians alike (he only makes mention of the *cocolos* once in his analysis, stating that they are cane cutters as well). This last point is certainly true; however, an overall empathy with the general labor force on the sugar estate does not suffice to counterbalance the negative representation of black immigrant cane cutters that threads through the text—some of which Matibag himself calls attention to. Furthermore, as I will show in the analysis, one of the most important non-stereotypical representations of a black subject—the *cocolo* George Brown—is not even acknowledged by Matibag. My work will then attempt to help fill this void.

Dawn Stinchcomb also picks up on the text’s representation of a miserable plight of a whole *class* of individuals—the estate workers: “Daniel’s [the narrator-protagonist’s] critical commentaries throughout the novel hint at an emerging Marxist ideology” (56). The critic rightly affirms, as did some of the others mentioned above, that the novel attempts to portray the misery and degradation experienced by the black workers (mostly of Haitian and West Indian *cocolo* descent), thereby affording them a certain humanity (I chose the term “certain” because some of the descriptions as well as their form of articulation hint at a subhuman status, as we shall see later). This constitutes a step away from a completely caricaturesque and exclusive representation of the black subject in Dominican literature. However, as Aida Heredia asserts, the text does not question or contest the way that Dominicans, even those in the same situation as the Haitian and *cocolo* employees, perceive themselves as racially superior; and that the Afro-

Dominican black is not included in the understanding of the oppression that the black worker suffers, as the Dominican worker Eduardo clearly demonstrates in his discourse about white supremacy (139). “Estos países son tierras de promisión para los blancos [...] Ya no traen negros del Africa, porque no hay necesidad de ir a buscarlos tan lejos, ni de pagarlos tan caros. Las ideas del Padre las Casas se pueden seguir practicando con *haitianos y cocos alquilados*” (Marrero Aristy 103, emphasis mine). The black subject is and remains the foreigner, not the Dominican himself. Heredia counts *Over* among those canonical Dominican texts that to her, are a “muestra elocuente de uno de los mecanismos de legitimidad del racismo contra el haitiano y de la obliteración del negro (y de la negritud) en Santo Domingo” (139).

The third novel that is the focus of this chapter, *Jengibre*, does not necessarily belong to the Dominican canon that Heredia refers to. As I already mentioned above, it was published in exile in Venezuela, and has been largely ignored by Dominican and other critics (Céspedes 19). Giovanni Di Pietro calls this text one of the great Dominican novels of all times (26). According to him, *Jengibre* is not only well written and accomplished in terms of its characters, the plot, and the narrative texture, but it also openly criticizes the *Trujillato* and its policies at the time they were occurring. The text represents the *Generalissimo* not as a kind and benevolent national father-figure, but rather as a megalomaniac and blood-thirsty tyrant who—while advancing his discourse about progress and popular well-being—fiercely exploited the rural population (25). In Di Pietro’s analysis, there is no mentioning of the role of the Haitians and West Indian *cocos* who form part of this miserable group. However, Diógenes Céspedes, author of the prologue to the novel’s edition that I am working with, does afford these black foreign workers a small amount of attention. Fitting within the overall Marxist tone of his analysis’s framework, he qualifies the differences in the levels of “revolutionary conscience” that the *cocos* and Haitians

possess within the text. The former are active protagonists in the organization of the sugar workers' strikes, while the latter are incapable of either understanding or participating in these uprisings, all due to a lack of "class consciousness" (27). Norberto James, a well-known Dominican literary scholar and poet of *cocolo* descent, wrote his doctoral dissertation on *Jengibre*.³² His argument bears similarities to the one proposed in this analysis: he makes the claim that while Pérez Cabral successfully condemns Trujillo, his text reproduces the same *ideology* that he set out to criticize (47). While *Jengibre* is touted to be a revolutionary and anti-Trujillo text, much more overtly than *Over*, it nevertheless repeats that very regime's discourse about Haitians and West Indians, and most importantly, as I will show, links Afro-descent and blackness to the inferior and powerless position of lower-class locals. The difference in the representation of these two groups within the text shall be further examined in my analysis, and may prove revelatory in terms of how the Dominican's own identity oppositional to that of their neighbor's is constructed, and which fissures in this type of oppositional representation could be suggestive for alternative ways of thinking about Africanness within the Eastern part of Hispaniola.

In light of these critical discussions of the novels that are the subject of this analysis, it then seems that the *representation* of the black subject, which is the question at the center of this analysis, for the most part reflects the elite's discourse on national identity. Yet, as some critics have pointed out, we also see the small sparks of the beginning of a subversive or more inclusive discourse, one that may slowly begin to "chisel away" at the direct and concrete opposition between Dominicans (as those who self-identify as Hispanic and "indio") and Afro-descendants,

³² *Un estudio sociocultural de dos novelas dominicanas de la era de Trujillo* analyzes *Jengibre* and Julio González Herrera's novel *Trementina, Clerén y Bongo* (1943), and the way that both texts, either discreetly or overtly, reiterate the *Generalissimo's* ideology.

opening up the space for a representation that may be more Afro-centered and less focused on difference. The coexistence of two such apparently contradictory tendencies within the same texts suggests what I have already mentioned in relation to what recent scholars such as Martínez, Mayes, and Méndez are driving at: a more complex picture of the relationship between elite-propagated ideological discourse and actual race-related (and all that that implies: socio-economic, political, and cultural) realities on the ground. Before turning to the detailed analysis of the novels themselves, I would like to remark an additional couple of things that I perceive as being pertinent to the discussion.

In Spain's literary tradition, particularly during the "Golden Age," black Africans have long occupied a place as "natural slaves" who—even when they were essentially viewed as humans with a soul—were socially, and consequentially intellectually and morally inferior. Their difference in pigmentation, culture and religion finally became a marker of this inferiority, and a justification for their evangelization, colonization and slavery. Given this ideological foundation, it is important to consider its reflection in the Golden Age literary tradition (particularly in the genre of the *comedia*) of representing the African as de-africanized, meaning that he has accepted the values and manners of Spanish life. "Por 'españoles' se ha de entender cristianos, representativos de una sociedad estamentaria en la que ellos ocuparán una posición subordinada." In these characters, the only remnant of Africa is the color of the skin (Fra Molinero 8). Are traces of this tradition repeated in the sugarcane novels of the 1930s? This actually reminds us very much of the structure of official national identity discourse in the Dominican Republic at the time that *Cañas y bueyes*, *Over* and *Jengibre* were published: while Africa may certainly be socially and culturally "purged" from Afro-descendants (the majority of Dominicans), dark skin indicates a lower social status, which may apply to both foreigners and

locals. Those darker-skinned individuals who are not Hispanicized in their language and culture are reduced to the status of the original African, viewed through Spanish eyes: the savage, the idiot, the monster, the natural-born slave. Those darker individuals that do not “purge” Africa from their cultural and social lives, but rather embrace it, fall into this latter category: the Haitians. This could also serve as an explanatory factor why Haitians and *cocolos* may be represented differently in the texts of this analysis: the latter may appear to be more de-Africanized than the former. If this fact were to hold true, it should be an indicator that the representation of the Afro subject in the three novels—to a varying degree—certainly reflects the Hispanophile and anti-Haitian discourse of the day. In that sense, an argument may be made that the texts, in the way they choose to represent Afro subjects, are heir to a literary tradition that originated in the Spanish Golden Age.

At the beginning of this introduction, I laid out the reasons for selecting *Cañas y bueyes*, *Over* and *Jengibre* as primary texts, one of them being the proximity of their publication date to the Massacre of 1937. It is notable that neither of the two novels published after this event makes much reference to it, even though both novels talk about the injustices that workers—particularly cane cutters—in the sugar industry have to endure. This is a group largely made up of Haitian migrants, many of whom were affected by *El corte*. One reason for this could be that geographically, the massacre is usually associated with the border zone between the Dominican Republic and Haiti, which is not necessarily the backdrop for the plantations where the novels’ plots develop. However, it is also known that people were killed and affected by this event even as far inland as San Pedro de Macorís, so it was not a geographically contained affair. A more valid argument in favor of the authors’ choice to pay very little textual attention this tragic event

could be that this was a conscious decision to avoid censorship.³³ As Andrés Mateo states: “Outside of trujillismo, no intellectual practice was possible, not even material survival” (66, translation mine). However, it raises suspicion that while *Over* is touted to classify as an anti-Trujillo text by some critics, an event that reflects one of the most integral parts of the *Generalissimo*’s ideology—anti-Haitianism—is not referred to at all, not even in a subtle fashion. Dawn Stinchcomb claims that there are indications that Marrero Arísty’s novel may have been written long before its publication *because* it does not mention the massacre (note 4, 116). However, I argue that since the novel was published two years after the slaughter, had the text’s primary intention been to criticize the treatment of black Haitian migrant workers in particular, it would have contained some kind of allusion to this pivotal event, even if the author had added this element during the editing process after the actual composition of the text.

Jengibre, as I have mentioned on a couple of occasions above, was published in exile, a fact that suggests that there was an even greater opportunity to mention *El corte* in this novel, as it was not subject to any direct censorship from the Trujillo regime. The plot itself is also very critical of the figure of the dictator himself, refusing to represent him in a favorable light. There is only one faint mentioning of the event during a discussion between two foreign “imperialists” who belong to the very upper class, and refer to the massacre as a “repatriation” of Haitians (Pérez Cabral 52). It is not clear whether this is an actual allusion to the massacre itself, or if the character Mr. Answer is merely referring to the historical event of actually expelling thousands of Haitians from the Dominican national territory in the years leading up to 1937.³⁴ It is not

³³ According to Berta Graciano, *Over* was actually removed from the Dominican market shortly after first being published in 1939 (59).

³⁴ Due to the 1934 “acuerdo fronterizo” signed by the *Generalissimo* and the Haitian president Vincent, a number of Dominican *latifundistas* had to cede part of their borderzone territory

impossible that the text limits itself to such a vague reference to the massacre because it wants to show that it was forbidden to make mention of the event. However, as my analysis will show, the novel is very open and direct about criticizing many other elements that were “unmentionables,” it also does not shy away from recounting historical events—like the murder of landowners who refused to sell, and the subsequent seizure of their property by government agents—it then seems very unlikely that this should be the reason behind the decision to heed such little attention to the topic.

Rather, I argue that the quasi-exclusion of the Massacre of 1937 from these two texts suggests that no significant criticism of the status quo and the regime ideology and policies towards the Afro subject was of interest to the authors, especially since this incident affected the regions and workers that are at the center of these sugarcane novels.³⁵ Both *Over* and *Jengibre* portray and even denounce the miserable situation of the sugar workers in general, and even occasionally permit small digressions from mainstream ideology in the way that Afro subjects are represented. These openings, however, are only large enough to function as a starting point for a more profound exploration of these fissures by later authors, as neither of the two texts succeeds in fundamentally undermining the existing structures of an anti-Haitian, and consequently, anti-Afro discourse that are part of Trujillo’s state ideology.

extending into Haiti. Trujillo, partially as a reaction to this powerful group’s increasing discontent with the Haitian farmers who remained on the Dominican side of the border, attempted to expel massive numbers of Haitians with the help of the military between 1935 and 1937. For more detailed information on this process, please see Franklin J. Franco’s *Historia del pueblo dominicano* 2: 523-26.

³⁵ Norberto James suggests that in the conversation between the American character Mr. Answer and the Spanish character José Rodríguez—both beneficiaries of the sugar industry—a reference is made to the massacre of 1937. The American reveals that “la repatriación de los haitianos [hecho que nos habrá] obligado a importar barloventinos” (89). However, this reference is very vague and indirect, and rather than judge or condemn it, the narrator does not give it much attention (contrary to his usual sharp and subjective qualification of characters and situations).

Let me now turn to the two recent novels, which propagate a much more Afro-inclusive vision of Dominicaness. As I have already mentioned, the existing criticism about *Tiempo muerto* and *La avalancha* is somewhat limited. Pura Emeterio Rondón, in *Estudios críticos de la literatura dominicana contemporánea* (2005), includes *Tiempo muerto* in a sub-section about the role that “official History” and “intrahistory” play in social and individual identity construction. The Dominican critic points to the use of contrast as one of the crucial elements in the development of the text, for example the opposition between the title and the novel’s “dimensión temporal [que] se caracteriza por un marcado dinamismo” (60). This notion of constant physical and mental movement refers to the multiple and intertwined narrators, characters, places and stories that construct the plot. The grandfather, or the “último de los cocos”, is at the center of these “intrahistories,” or minutiae of everyday ordinary life, that help reconstruct the history of the West Indian migrants in the country. Emerterio Rondón reads the overall text, and particularly the criticism expressed through the character Irma, as a recognition and vindication of the Anglo-Caribbean migrants’ contribution to Dominican culture. While the critic briefly mentions the racial realities that are part of the narrative—in relation to Irma’s denouncing of the discrimination the *cocolos* experience—her analysis of the representation of Afro subjects is limited to this short intervention.

Rudyard Alcocer’s discussion of *Tiempo muerto*, on the other hand, centers almost exclusively on the topic of West Indian migrants to the Dominican Republic, and particularly on their identity as black subjects. He claims that the novel “both documents and denounces ... the negative treatment historically given to *Cocolos*” (66). The author points out that, starting from the very beginning, the text is full of direct references to racial identity. Alcocer argues that contrary to many other Afro-Hispanic literary works, such references in Stanley’s novel are not

ambiguous or volatile, but rather tend to be stable. His primary example for this is the narrator—I should clarify that Alcocer is actually referring to one of the multiple narrators, the grandfather—who self-identifies as black, and is never self-conscious or doubtful but keenly aware of the generally negative implications his skin color had for his position in Dominican society. The critic’s most significant observation in this context is that the narrator’s assertion of blackness is an individual experience that is intrinsically tied to his particular historical, cultural, and personal circumstance (66-67). However, to this observation I would like to add the following: at the same time as being subjective, Raymond Smith’s experience and assertion is intended to speak for those that share his particular circumstances, if this novel is, as Alcocer claims, a way for Stanley to vindicate his ancestors’ fate as Afro subjects in Quisqueya.

Johnny Webster’s “La historia de un negro no le interesa a nadie: el *cocolo* en *Tiempo muerto* de Avelino Stanley” seeks to penetrate the historical context that surrounded the *cocolo* sugar workers’ experience in the Dominican Republic. The critic explains the historical realities that enclose the narration and how they are reflected in Stanley’s text, establishing a connection between the two through the figure of the grandfather and his trajectory as a foreign hand on Dominican sugar plantations. He also makes mention of the Haitians—mostly in a comparative context—who shared the peripheral condition of the other migrant *braceros*, and how they were met with an hatred of historical roots that exacerbated their unfortunate plight (24). Webster calls *Tiempo muerto* an intent to aesthetically recover the past of the *cocolos*, and concludes it to simultaneously be a sort of “voyage in”³⁶ and a “fenómeno de desterritorialización tras el cual lo

³⁶ “Voyage in” is a concept coined by Elizabeth Abel in her study of the female perspective of the *Bildungsroman* (1983). In Webster’s article, however, the “voyage in” is closer to the way Edward Said used the notion in *Culture and Imperialism* (1994, 216). Said re-appropriates and reverses the idea of the traditional voyage to the Third World’s interior in the name of

subalterno gravita hacía lo hegemónico y lo democratiza” (27). The author does tie the marginalization experienced by these subjects to their Afro heritage and their skin color, although he does not do so very explicitly until the end of the article. Furthermore, his analysis of Stanley’s novel is reduced to the chapters where the grandfather recounts his life as a migrant laborer in the sugar industry surrounding San Pedro de Macorís, thereby neglecting the rich structural and narrative complexities of the rest of the novel, and the contemporary *cocolo* experience and potential places where an ideological subtext related to racial realities could reveal itself.

As I mentioned above, Matos Moquete’s novel has received very little critical attention. One valuable intervention is an article by Julia Borst, in which she argues that *La avalancha* as a whole represents an evocative and subliminal critique and dismantling of the fictive society’s racist perspectives. At the same time, as Borst rightly observes, the text also points to the complexities inherent in the discourse of alterity that has marked Dominicans perception of their own identity vis-à-vis their Haitian neighbors. In other words, she shows that Matos Moquete’s text reconstructs Dominican conceptions of identity—based on an opposition to Haitians and their Afro-identification—to then dismantle and destabilize them through the use of irony and clever puns. My analysis of *La avalancha* will connect with hers in the sense that I expand her analysis of the use and unsettling of stereotypes regarding the way that Afro subjects are represented in the novel. Part of my exploration will focus on a play on words and concepts that Borst does not include in her analysis, but that occupies a central role in the text: namely, the Black Legend. And while I largely accept Borst’s argument about the author’s intention to

colonization. “Voyage in” refers to the movement and integration of Third World thinkers into the First World metropolis; a sort of insurgent act of “writing back to the center”.

subvert the racism inherent in mainstream Dominican ideological discourse, I pay close attention to the ambivalence in the ideological discourse presented in the novel by way of juxtaposing multiple, often opposing perspectives, and how this affects the way that the process of identity negotiation is represented.

Interestingly enough, the author of *Tiempo muerto*—Avelino Stanley—included *La avalancha* in his anthology of recent Dominican novels (from 1980 to 2009). Among the many things that he praises about the text is the fact that it addresses what he refers to as a void in Dominican literature, a topic barely touched in passing. He concludes that the novel was written “con una visión en la que no se rechaza al haitiano, sino que se presenta como parte de esa realidad que tiene el país ante sí para que sea el propio lector que saque sus conclusiones” (243). It is noteworthy that Stanley, a writer with similar ideological musings as Matos Moquete when it comes to Afro migrants and their experience in the Dominican Republic, does not claim that Matos Moquete is “taking sides,” but rather that he is representing a reality and leaving it up to the reader to make a judgement about it. This results in three things: first, that it minimizes the idea of an absolute advocacy by *La avalancha* for the Others; and second, that it complicates the notion of simplistic for versus against binary thinking. At the same time, and this is the third effect, Stanley’s assuming of this representation as a reality—one that does not reject the Haitian— ideologically places him away from an anti-Haitian or anti-Afro discourse of opposition, thereby once more confirming the ideological undertone that informs his own work. This way of approaching Dominican identity—particularly in relation to racial perceptions—as a complex process of constant negotiation between varying worldviews coincides with what this study aims to show through the exposition of a simultaneous presence of different ideological currents within the same literary texts.

ORGANIZATION OF THE ANALYSIS

In all five chapters of this literary analysis, these simultaneous ideological currents are made visible through the ways the Afro subject is represented within the text. In the first four chapters, I evaluate whether this representation principally coincides with a pro- or anti-Afro discourse, to then proceed to expose the fissures or gaps in this discourse.

Moscoso Puello's *Cañas y bueyes*—the subject of Chapter 1—principally represents the black migrant subject in line with the ideological discourse contemporary to its publication in the 1930s. I find that the text's basic structure, the narrator's position and attitude, the marking of the Haitian and *cocolo* characters as nameless and black, and the use of language and direct dialogue as well as gendered representations all help create a negative image of Haitians and *cocolos*. They are represented according to stereotypes that depict them as ignorant and savage, and that equate them to the status of animals. Their main trait is a quintessential difference from the Dominican characters. Yet, at the same time, a small number of fissures—or occasions that complicate such a straightforward depiction along specific ideological lines—are present within the text. These include the narrator's admission that skin color decides one's identity in the Dominican Republic; there is also a concurrent attribution of mutually exclusive oppositional characteristics (such as, for instance, docile and threatening) to black migrants, and the depiction of Dominican and foreign cane cutters as equally disadvantaged and raggedy individuals.

In Chapter 2, I find that Marrero Aristy's *Over*—albeit being touted as an anti-Trujillo novel—also represents black migrants as ignorant, child- or animal-like, and most of all pitiful. The text does so through the positioning of the narrator, through marking and unmarking of racial groups, naming, references to slavery, language use, and through the way female characters are represented. Despite a main ideological undercurrent that reiterates negative

stereotypes, fissures are also present in this text. I find, for instance, that the tone is used in a way that diminishes differences between black migrants and locals contrary to the narrator-protagonist's vision; I also encounter a very subtle suggestion of a common history of slavery. The most important fissure in the overall dominant anti-Afro tone that informs the rest of the narrative is the critical discourse pronounced by the sophisticated and well-spoken *cocolo* character called the *inglesito*. It directly undermines all of the notions of ignorance, insignificance, and helplessness that the principal ideological discourse associates with black subjects, and replaces them with an image of an educated, positive, and dynamic individual.

Despite an intended Marxist criticism along class-lines, the overall negative depiction of Afro-subjects continues in Pérez Cabral's *Jengibre*. In this third chapter, I outline how through the opinionated narrator, the racial marking of black subjects as inferior, and the use of vernacular language reiterate a negative difference between the Dominican ideal and the image of Afro-descendants based on stereotypes. However, a greater distinction is made between Haitians, *cocolos*, and Afro-Dominicans than was the case in *Cañas y bueyes* and in *Over*. The former are depicted as outright animals; the *cocolos* are represented as capable strike leaders with an already developed class consciousness; and Afro-Dominicans, while said to be responsible for their own pitiful existence, are undoubtedly considered to be part of the nation. *Jengibre*, just like the preceding two novels, also contains a number of meaningful fissures in its ideological fabric. These include, for instance, the text's uncertainty in the way it ascribes the roles of victim and perpetrator, thereby undermining the validity of rigid categorization. Furthermore, the negative attributes of a Haitian character—savagery, greed, and cowardice—exactly mirror those exhibited by the Dominican character Enerio, thus eliminating notions of difference. Finally, I find that some of the Spanish ideals underlying conservative ideology are

seriously questioned. The detrimental consequences of blindly subscribing to patriarchal rule are exemplified by an innocent girl's death; and the Catholic Church is depicted as a corrupt and profit-seeking institution rather than a benevolent refuge for the poor.

In sum, in the sugarcane novels, despite their depiction of Afro subjects according to the stereotypes prevailing in Trujillo's discourse, contain fissures that complicate the notion of a simplistic and straightforward ideological direction. Rather, the simultaneous presence of multiple contradictory representations speaks of the complexity inherent in the process of Dominican identity formation, in particular in their relationship to blackness. Ideological discourse and lived experience of racial difference—as depicted in these texts—is not the same.

In Chapter 4, where I analyze the fairly recently published novel *Tiempo muerto* by Stanley, we observe a paradigm shift. That is to say that this text strives to represent the Afro subject in much more affirmative and inclusive ways, as opposed to a discourse of difference and rejection that was predominant in the sugarcane novels. I discuss how this is partially achieved through the use of a plurality of narrative voices that, in a truly Caribbean fashion, deprivileges any particular viewpoint and thus allows for the inclusion of multiple perspectives. What I refer to as “*cocolo* speech” is not used to negatively differentiate the Afro-subject, as was the case in *Cañas y bueyes*, *Over*, and *Jengibre*. Rather, it forms an intricate part of the overall multi-vocal narrative structure that seeks to inscribe the neglected diasporic *cocolo* experience into Dominican history. Yet, *Tiempo muerto*'s main undercurrent that seeks to propagate an inclusion of the Afro subject into the national imaginary also contains fissures. For instance, one of the key *cocolo* representatives, a character-narrator called Raymond Smith, does not take up an empowered discourse. Rather, he resigns himself to reiterating the image of the black migrant as a poor and exploited worker who has no option but to conform to his place at the bottom ranks of

society. Another fissure can be found in the depiction of his son Jacob, which exactly replicates a long tradition of representing Afro subjects with negative stereotypes. Jacob is sexually and scientifically objectified, voiceless, happy and infantile; he also possesses great rhythm, and, most importantly, as an Afro-descendant male he is endowed with naturally exaggerated sexual skill. Yet, particularly in this last example, multiple readings are possible, and fixed ideological directions become increasingly more difficult to define. Read differently—through the lens of the black woman that pronounces the discourse—Jacob’s representation not only affirms the Afro subject’s place within the nation, but also reverses traditional patriarchal roles that form part of the Hispanic establishment which conservative forces praise as the ideal for Dominican identity. Finally, the most interesting fissure I find in *Tiempo muerto* is an almost absolute absence of Haitian characters, given the novel’s setting an environment where they have traditionally exhibited a very large presence. Through the invisibility of Haitians, the text successfully establishes a difference and a distance between them and the *cocolos*. This disassociation helps establish a more “Dominican” view of the West Indian migrants, an integration that mimics the exclusion predicated by nationalist discourse: when the *cocolos* become less like Haitians, they become more like the Dominicans.

In the last chapter, I analyze Matos Moquete’s *La avalancha: leyenda negra*, another recently published novel with a principal ideological undercurrent that propagates an Afro-inclusive Dominican identity. Unlike the preceding novels, it is set in an urban area, following contemporary trends within Dominican literature such as “new Dominican novel.” Furthermore, this text does not contain fissures in a principal ideological undercurrent. Rather, Matos Moquete’s novel explicitly juxtaposes opposing ideological perspectives, utilizing techniques such as repetition, contradiction, and exaggeration, creating a constant sentiment of ambivalence

in the way the text can be read (as with Irma's discourse in *Tiempo muerto*). This consistently holds true for all the elements that I analyze: the various uses of the notion of the black legend, the representation of stereotypes related to smell and sexuality, and the use of language. The environment of uncertainty created by the novel runs counter any conception of Dominican identity as a fixed and stable, but rather presents it as a porous and complex ongoing process that cannot escape a variety of attitudes towards Afro subjects. One of the questions that, in my mind, further connects *Tiempo muerto* and *La avalancha* is why the former has received scholarly attention while the latter has been almost entirely neglected by critics. I ask whether Matos Moquete's text's representation of the intricate hypocrisy on part of the business elite—who are some of the harshest proponents of anti-Haitian discourse yet some of the biggest benefactors of their illegal status and cheap labor—may be one of the reasons behind this discrepancy. One may presume that many of the likely readers of this book belong to the at least somewhat educated strata of society. The way the text is constructed, engaging with it would force intellectuals to take a stance on a plethora of issues related to today's Haitian presence in the Dominican Republic, particularly because of the fictive universe's closeness to real quotidian space. While the silence may be a statement in itself, to many, ignoring the text in critical terms may be preferable to a potentially politicizing debate.

1.0 CHAPTER ONE

***CAÑAS Y BUEYES*: MARGINAL DIFFERENCES AT THE PERIPHERY**

My analysis opens with the earliest text of the sugarcane cycle. Francisco E. Moscoso Puello's *Cañas y bueyes*, was published in 1936 but actually conceived about a decade earlier; the author himself states that by 1928, the text was written, but he was unsure as to whether it would be of interest to the reader of that time (Graciano 29). The Afro-subject, clearly demarcated as Haitian and *cocolo*, plays a somewhat tangential albeit not negligible role in this novel. The plot focuses mainly on the plight of the Dominican *colono* and the former landowners—who raised cattle and practiced subsistence agriculture—at the hands of the ever-more-powerful sugar estates, generally run and owned by North Americans. The black migrant worker's key role in the sugar industry is acknowledged only by the U.S. manager Mr. Moore, as part of a critical discourse about the local population's limited work-ethic and horizon: “Sin jaitiano, sin cocola, no hay zafra” (Moscoso Puello, 213). The local population looks at these subjects mostly as despicable competition in the labor market, part of the machinery that seeks to exploit them and destroy their livelihoods. This contempt expresses itself in various ways, but most importantly through the emphasis on skin color, language and cultural difference as articulated by the narrator as well as through the enunciation of certain characters. While this analysis is interested in those representations present *within* the text, it is interesting to note that the author's own stance on the subject of Dominican racial realities are not very far removed from what the novel reflects.

Moscoso Puello, in *Cartas a Evelina* (1941), says that Dominicans should never be compared to Haitian *comegente*:

Como Ud. no ignorará, los habitantes de la República Dominicana, son en su mayoría mulatos. (...) Pero debo advertirle, señora, que los dominicanos somos constitucionalmente blancos, porque ha sido a título de tales que hemos establecido esta República, que Ud. no debe confundir con la de Haity, donde los hombres comen gente, hablan francés patois y abundan los papaluases. (cited in Cordero 152)

At the same time, and in the same letters, Moscoso Puello also makes fun of the Dominican mentality he describes as “españolizante e indigenista que falsamente idealizaba nuestra estirpe” (cited in James 55). While the first quote reiterates and applies a Hispanophile and anti-Haitian ideology, the second shows that the author is aware of the constructed nature of such a basis for national identity, and hence ridicules it. This ambivalence in his writings in *Cartas a Evelina* is similar to the one I will point out in *Cañas y bueyes*. While as a whole, the text seems to follow official ideology, it also reveals fissures in the representation of the Afro subject that question whether such a perspective is all-encompassing or not.

The overall narration is mostly linear, but the many different characters who enter and exit the scene make it somewhat difficult to focus on any particular figure. As Berta Graciano points out, the abundance of movement tends to obstruct a coherent development of the plot, and make it lack an internal logic (29). There are a few exceptions to this rule, like the *colono* Don Marcial, whose life-story is central to the progression of the plot, and Rosendo, the most developed character representative of the Dominican workers on the sugar estate. The alternating perspectives of these two characters are the most prominent ones in the overall “piecemeal”

narration. Since there is not typical “hero,” and due to the attempt to represent the worker’s life as close to reality as possible, the text reminds the reader of a chronicle, more so than a novel. According to William Siemens, this is a characteristic that *Cañas y bueyes* shares with other Hispanic-Caribbean novels of its time (184), for example Enrique Laguerre’s *La llamarada* (Puerto Rico, 1935). The somewhat busy and collective rather than individually focused nature of the narration makes the destiny of most characters other than the *colono* seem more or less irrelevant, as they only serve to illustrate the bigger picture surrounding Don Marcial’s trajectory. Such characters, which include the foreign Afro-subject, are not profoundly developed or analyzed, but rather represented in a superficial manner, utilizing stereotypes and overgeneralizations. The mere structure of the narration therefore contributes to the representation of Haitians and *cocolos* according to dominant ideological discourse. The focus on the collective instead of on the individual also facilitates the representation of black migrant workers as a group, contributing to the image that they are not distinct subjects but a conglomerate of obscure beings, easily lumped together under certain categories such as savage (animal-like), dirty, and most of all, ignorant. There are many occasions in the text where the foreign black workers are represented as a group that embodies such qualities, but the character Rosendo’s indirect discourse about the Haitians sums it up concisely:

Los consideraba como verdaderos prietos, más brutos que él, sobre todo porque no habían aprendido ni siquiera a hablar [...] Además no eran más que unos bebedores de guarapo. Se alimentaban con porquerías [...] No sirven más que para brujos. Esos haitianos son como los pericos, decía, andan en bandadas y desde que uno grita se juntan totitos. Amigos de hacer bancos como las vacas. (Moscoso Puello 229)

As Graciano points out, “la forma más usada es la de presentar personajes que corroboren o confirmen el punto de vista del enunciador” (51). This already gives us a hint about the ideological positioning of the narrator, and about those who have a chance to give their voice in the text: a point of view very much in line with the anti-Haitian ideological discourse of the time, one that is necessarily hinged upon Afro-phobic ideals.

The above quote also reveals a lack of impartiality in the apparently omniscient narrator. Instead of letting the character enunciate this very personal viewpoint about his Haitian coworkers, it is recounted by the narrator himself through indirect speech. In the reader, this technique should arouse doubt about the objectivity of what the narrator recounts. Despite the fact that he credits Rosendo as the source of this opinion, the narrating voice pronounces these words, suggesting a certain complicity with what the character is saying. While many remarks evoking negative stereotypes about black foreign workers are part of the direct discourse of some of the Dominican characters in the novel, the narrator himself expresses a significant amount of these types of derogatory comments—in line with dominant ideology. Some examples of such subjective description include: “No saben ni les gusta carretear. [...] los bueyes criollos no aprenden *patúa*” (Moscoso Puello 100). “Penetran por todas partes como las plagas de insectos.” “Blakis sonríe maliciosamente” (Moscoso Puello 110). “Los cortadores parecen cuervos enormes manchando el verde de la caña. La mayoría son haitianos” (Moscoso Puello 165). This alters his allegedly objective and detached position of the all-knowing observer, and also strengthens the ideologically Afro-and xenophobic undercurrent of the text. Berta Graciano has argued that from the beginning of the novel the elaborate descriptions of the landscape are infiltrated by personal impressions that reveal the narrator’s opinion, rather than an impartial depiction of the scenery (46-7).

These subjective elements, in concurrence with its chronicle-like structure, then immediately make us think that the text is, at least partially, driven by an ideological interest. The narrator of *Cañas y bueyes*, notwithstanding his apparent omniscience, follows an agenda of personal opinion and ideological predisposition, particularly in his representation of Haitian and *cocolo* sugar workers. According to Alcántara Almánzar, the narrator basically undertakes a defense of the *colono* Don Marcial, who, before the sugar estates took over, belonged to the well-to-do class (*Narrativa* 55). A perspective from a superior social position, not primarily interested in altering the way that the migrant workers are being perceived, then naturally informs his representation of these characters. It seems conceivable that from his place of enunciation, he will choose the sort of references that closely resemble the opinions of the majority. His alignment with an elitist viewpoint more so underscores a possible alignment with elitist ideology, one that conceives the Afro subject as an inferior Other. In the text's universe, one of the main threats to the *colono*'s position stems from the presence of black migrant workers and their cheap labor in the Dominican sugar estates (despite the fact that the tenant farmer also exploits and depends on them). Thus, it seems even more plausible that a less objective narrator with an ideological agenda—one that vindicates the old rural hierarchy and opposes the new, foreign-infiltrated sugar industry—would embrace the Afro-phobic climate of the text's universe rather than attempt to undermine or change it.

The overall tone of the narration is downtrodden, filled with nostalgia for a past that has been changed for the worse by the arrival of the sugar industry. The positioning of the narrator—speaking from a point in the present about the past—underscores this mood. The abundant descriptions of the landscape and its inhabitants at the beginning of the novel—reminding us of nineteenth century *costumbrista* works, inflected with some modernist elements—evoke a

sentimental, almost romantic longing for what is no longer there. The present, and an insinuated future, appear in a very pessimistic light. The interesting thing about this negativity is that it is partially motivated by the racial realities presented in the text. First of all, there is an awareness that race is an important factor that largely influences the positioning of an individual within society. “Aquí ningún dominicano vale nada. Depende de su color” exclaims Don José, one of the novel’s characters, only to add a little later: “todas las cosas son aquí por color” (Moscoso Puello 19). Two problems are associated with this colonial inheritance. First of all, in a nation with a great variety of “racial mixing” on the one hand, and the utmost importance of one’s shade of skin color on the other, there is a great lack of unity amongst the citizens. Don José as well as the character Manuel Ramírez lament this fact: “un pueblo de veinte colores, nadie puede obtener la opinión unánime de esos veinte grupos. Por eso aquí nadie es nada, sino para su grupo. Y por eso cuando uno sobresale en un grupo, los otros diez y nueve lo aplastan” (Moscoso Puello 19). These rifts serve the elites because they help them maintain their status on top of the social hierarchy. The critical acknowledgement of the importance of color and a hierarchical order of “racial categories” is one of the areas that presents a small opening in a *Weltanschauung* that is supposed to define Dominicans as Hispanic. And while the unity among Dominicans is lamented by these two characters, it also remains clear that despite a recognition of the mixed origins of the people, “white” remained the preferred point of reference, while an association with black was looked upon with contempt (Graciano 42).

This brings us to the second problem associated with this colonial inheritance: the great influx of those who belong to an unwanted “color-group”: black cane cutters, migrant workers from Haiti and the minor Antilles, who are responsible for “staining” the white origins of Dominicans. “A esa industria debe este país [...] su estancamiento, su atraso, su desorganización

y, sobre todo, su *inferioridad racial*. La industria azucarera en los trópicos no ha necesitado otra cosa que tierras, bueyes y negros. Mientras más negros, mejor” (Moscoso Puello 36, emphasis mine). This shows the predisposition of the text. While it criticizes the divisions between Dominicans and claims racial difference as the underlying cause, the core racist ideology is not problematized but rather reiterated. The anti-Afro discourse that the Dominican elites would continue to use for decades to come is reflected in the novel, which reaffirms the assertion that part of the doom brought to the future of the Dominican Republic by the foreign sugar estates is related to the great influx of Afro-descendant migrant workers. This also insinuates that before the sugar industry took over and brought in so many dark-skinned individuals—during those times past that the text describes in a nostalgic tone—the people were “better off,” a direct association of Afro or black with “bad” or “worse.” Far from denouncing or criticizing dominant ideological discourse, then, the tone and the mood of the novel follow its trajectory in the sense that they affirm the racial inferiority of Afro-descendants and blame part of the country’s problems on the arrival of this Other.

The above claim that the notion of the Dominican Republic as a racially mixed environment—but with a strong tendency towards whiteness as the desirable norm—is reflected in the text is also evidenced by the way it employs marked and unmarked categories for its characters. Jerome Branche, in the introduction to *Colonialism and Race in Luso-Hispanic Literature* (2006), points to the literary tradition of marked and unmarked categories, which generally consists of physical descriptions that emphasize and name blackness while whiteness is presented to be the norm against which all “others” are measured. What Branche refers to as “race naming”—for example “negro” or “negra”—“serves as a primary parameter to establish difference” (2). Frantz Fanon explains how, for someone of African descent in a white-oriented

society, his human or professional quality is first and foremost hinged upon at the phenomenon of being a “negro,” naturally associated with negative difference. “With people like me, they tell me it is in spite of my color. When they dislike me, they point out that it is not because of my color. [...] It is always the Negro teacher, the Negro doctor” (261). There are quite a few examples of this in *Cañas y bueyes*, especially in the first part of the novel: “el negro Fausto” (Moscoso Puello 25), “Eulio Mejía, un negro como pocos” (Moscoso Puello 21), “José del Carmen, un negro más pobre que un ratón de iglesia” (Moscoso Puello 22). As this last quote shows, “negro” also indicates a place at the bottom of the social hierarchy. The reader is reminded of these individuals' origin and place in society, while the text reiterates stereotypes at the same time: “Cundo, un negro fuerte y alto, que hacía funciones de esclavo, cuando sus progenitores que lo fueron, habían ya desaparecido” (Moscoso Puello 17). It is significant that those who are subject to such racial naming are generally *Dominicans*, showing the link between official “anti- Haitian” ideological discourse, and its consequences for those Dominicans who are categorized as dark-skinned or Afro-descendants.³⁷ For example, when the character Anastasia first sees her “nietecita obscura, una negrita,” she goes to bed early because she feels betrayed (54). Fanon seems to describe the attitude of the majority of Dominican characters and the narrator in *Cañas y bueyes*, who have subscribed to the mainstream Afro-phobic ideology, despite of the large probability that they themselves are technically of African descent: “I attach myself to my brothers, Negroes like myself. To my horror, they too reject me. They are almost white” (261). In Moscoso Puello’s novel, “los negros” are, through the mechanism of naming,

³⁷ As I have explained in the introductory section on the socio-historical context of this analysis, to be categorized as an Afro-descendant in the Dominican Republic is much more complex than a simple reduction to one’s phenotype, because it also serves as a social category. Those who occupy higher echelons in the social hierarchy are generally seen as whiter, regardless of their skin hue.

automatically relegated to a place away from the aspired norm, are labeled as “different” and are thus less desirable.

For Haitians and *cocolos*, this mechanism of difference—race naming—does not go far enough. They fit a category that is completely on its own, even farther removed from the white center. They are described in ways that poignantly focus on their phenotype, but that go beyond just pointing to their skin color: about the Haitians it is said that “a muchos apenas se les distinguen los ojos—solo tienen blanco en el rostro las dentaduras” (Moscoso Puello 107); the *cocolo* “Blakis les enseña los dientes como pulpa de cajuil” (Moscoso Puello 110). The foreign workers’ names themselves are markedly different from the Spanish-sounding “José” or “Anselmo” or “Juan” of the novel’s Dominican characters. Daniel even exclaims at one point that “[los haitianos]...la mayoría de ellos son Pié” (Moscoso Puello 118), as in “they are all the same.” In the case of “Blakis,” the name is a direct reference to the character’s Otherness—as it marks his phenotype through the use of his foreign mother tongue. Language, as will be discussed below, is another element used in the text to emphasize difference between local and black migrant workers. Since the Haitian and *cocolo* names already signify difference, they are usually not accompanied by a term that directly marks them—for example, the text speaks of “Telemaque” or “Priscilién” or “Blakis” rather than of “el negro Telemaque.” It is my impression that this is a technique to distinguish them from the Dominican “negros,” who are, as I have shown above, subject to this particular marker of difference from those compatriots who are not considered to be black.

As we have seen, race naming certainly occurs in *Cañas y bueyes*, but interestingly enough the “normative” term “white” is also marked, and above that is not reserved for locals, but exclusively for the North American owners and operators of the sugar plantations. This

technique serves, first of all, to emphasize the difference between the two “races,” affirming their place in the socio-economic hierarchy. The ideal that one should strive for is embodied in the position of the wealthy white American manager, never in that of the dark-skinned individual occupying the lowest echelon of society. Even though the “whites” are despised and criticized for making the locals subject to exploitation in the sugar plantations, as well as for their arrogant demeanor, their success and way of living is something to be envied and wished for. They are loathed—but at the same time, for those who want to move up the latter, they serve as the main point of reference: “y refiriole una historia de un tal Toñito que se creció tanto que ya hablaba hasta como los blancos” (Moscoso Puello 205). Rosendo claims that he has learned how to make it in life from the “whites.” They are his point of reference when he speaks about success, the closer one gets to them the more efficacious one appears. “Si no hubiera trabajao con estos blancos todavía andaría yo con un jacho buscando cangrejos por las barrancas de los ríos para comer una carnita.” And the narrator adds that “él había visto el mar, los vapores, y sobre todo mucha jente blanca. Conocía hasta los noruegos” (Moscoso Puello 218). Furthermore, the whites’ names generally are preceded by the title “Mister,” which works both as a marker of difference and as a title that communicates a certain type of respect.

In the end it seems that the unnamed category in the text is the person of mixed racial origin (as mentioned above, the text claims the existence of twenty different colors in the Dominican Republic). I would like to repeat that an acknowledgement of this mixture does by no means imply an acceptance of African heritage, as the continued embrace of the white ideal and the vehement contempt towards Haitian and *cocolo* characters—based on their African Otherness—reveal. However, it does at least suggest that there may be a starting point from which to expand the representation of the elements that make up this mixture in the future.

1.1 DIALOGUES OF DIFFERENCE: LANGUAGE AS INDICATOR OF SOCIAL STATUS

A textual element that, on the other hand, definitely communicates an inherent inferiority in the Haitian and *cocolo* characters are the passages of direct dialogue, where their manner of speaking—imitating their mistakes—labels them directly as inadequate speakers of Spanish. In *Cañas y bueyes*, language serves as an indicator of one's place within society, it is largely related to socio-economic class. Don Marcial, who used to belong to the Dominican elites, speaks eloquently about his own misery: “Soy un burro de carga, pensaba. Un esclavo de la Finca. Ahora un empleado, viviendo de un miserable sueldo que se me ha fijado, porque todos mis esfuerzos se han consumido en levantar un crédito enorme que no podré cancelar jamás” (Moscoso Puello 244). The main administrator, the *Mayordomo*, expresses himself in correct Spanish: “Quizás espera que se lo compren a buen precio” (Moscoso Puello 72). Colloquial language is used in some places, but is mostly enunciated by characters that belong to the lowest strata, meaning that they do not possess property and are generally poor. Rosendo, for example, who even brags about his lack of possessions, speaks in the following way: “Y tós nos vamos a morir! Yo si que no sé pa que tantas agallas, si solamente necesitamos la del joyo. Manífica! Por eso yo no he tenío nunca ná. Toy conforme con mis brazos” (Moscoso Puello 46). A peon who doesn't have a name, but is identified solely by his position, says: “Uté vido ese hombre? Ese no e de po aquí! Yo credé que e de la gente” (Moscoso Puello 26). A nameless woman, who is defined solely as “una negrita que no cesó de bailar desde que llegó” is one of the very few explicitly Afro-Dominican characters who enunciate something in the text: “Y por ónde vinién” (Moscoso Puello 27)? In a Hispanophile society, where those closest to the ruling center are represented as speaking the most standard Spanish, those whose language is most removed from

that center are automatically delegated to the periphery. These examples show how language—besides its role in making the novel’s fictional universe appear more reality-like—is also an indicator of social position: the lower the position, the less “well-spoken” subjects become, the less conform to standard, “civilized” Spanish, which is the language used by the narrator. This automatically marks the black characters of the novel, and particularly *cocolos* and Haitians, who not only have a “foreign” accent because they have a different mother tongue, but who also frequently commit mistakes, both factors that are reproduced in the text. Besides, Haitian and *cocolo* characters are mostly spoken about, being afforded little direct dialogue. This is to say that they only speak for themselves occasionally, already limiting their voice, in addition to the manner in which their speech is represented. In the following example, the Haitian cane cutter Telemaque is complaining to his *mayordomo* Chencho about how little he makes: “No juega tu Chenche. Tu siempre me diga así. Y yo tá perdé. No sacá ná. Tú no ve mi pantalón ta rompió” (Moscoso Puello 107). Instead of giving him money as promised, Chencho offers him a cigarette, which, according to the narrator, satisfied the worker: “Una sonrisa de satisfacción se dibujó en el rostro de Telemaque” (Moscoso Puello 108). Shortly after, Chencho sends a character named Priscilién to find more Haitian workers, to which the latter replies that this time his superior would have to pay him, not like last time when “Tu me dite quence plimelo, dipué, vente y no mi dite má.” Once again, Chencho buys the foreign Afro subject off with very little: this time a voucher for a drink of *tafia* (a cheap clear liquor made from sugarcane), which evokes the reaction “Ah! Chenche! Tu sabi mucho” from Priscilién (Moscoso Puello 109). The apparent lack of a sense of value in the Haitian characters—they settle for close to nothing and apparently feel satisfied and grateful for having been cheated—is underscored by their use of language,

making them appear child-like in their inability to speak correctly and to reason like an adult.³⁸ This resonates with an ideological discourse that depicts Afro subjects—particularly Haitians, but by extension others as well—as uncivilized, unintelligent, and most importantly as a group of sub-persons separate from the nation, as the opposite of Dominican.

Just like the Haitian characters, the West Indian *cocolos* speak in an incorrect manner that makes them seem child-like and less intelligent. Blakis, for example, says: “Mi no comprendi, Chencho!” and a little later, “Mi no sabi, mi no intiendi” (Moscoso Puello 110). But while the enunciation itself is laced with errors, it seems to carry a different tone than the apparently docile way the Haitians speak. The above quote is preceded by the narrator's explanation that Blakis *pretends* not to understand on purpose. He is made out to be more rebellious than Telemaque or Priscilién, exhibiting a certain agency. This is not necessarily represented as a positive trait within the text, which is written from the Dominican viewpoint. However, it does tell the reader something about the way that *cocolos* and Haitians are represented differently, despite both being delegated to the inferior status of black migrant workers. While both are incapable of speaking correct Spanish, the Creole-speaking subjects are *naturally* imbecile, while those of West Indian origin *choose* to appear that way. This subtle but important difference is the first indicator of the distinction in the representation of the two groups.

³⁸ Already during the Spanish Golden Age—particularly in theater and poetry—black characters spoke incorrectly, in a way that Baltasar Fra Molinero calls “habla o lengua de negro.” This way of representing black subjects' speech in literature was part of a greater project of the creation of an immutable, ahistorical stereotype, and a cultural vision of the black subject as an anomaly. Blacks were seen as “un grupo de individuos sin poder [...] equiparable a un grupo de niños, y como niños los quería ver la mayoría blanca” (Moscoso Puello 3). In a certain way, in *Cañas y bueyes*, the depiction of the Haitian characters' puerile attitude combined with their use of language reminds us of the image of Afro subjects created during Spanish Golden Age literature, one that was based on the idea that blacks were naturally slaves, this is to say, subhuman.

Before exploring this difference further, let me return to the question of language. In *Monolingualism of the Other* (1998), Jacques Derrida describes the act of forbidding the access to a certain kind of speech as the fundamental or absolute interdiction (32). While the author ties this statement to his own experience as a subject of the French colonial education enterprise, we may also apply it to the technique used in *Cañas y bueyes*. As Haitian and *cocolo* characters are denied a certain access to speech—the Spanish represented in the text as locally spoken, as “belonging” to those who form part of the nation³⁹—they are automatically negated the status of equals. Their own language, particularly the Haitian’s Creole, is marked as a sub-idiom of lesser value by the condescending name *patúa* (please see, for example, the above quote by the character Rosendo, where he claims that not even the oxen understand this language). This is another way in which language contributes to the representation of these Afro subjects as Others, as outsiders, conform to mainstream ideological discourse. This is one example of a mechanism that ties the idea of an extra-national identity to being of African descent: a difference in language, but not a difference of equals but rather the incapacity of speaking the “national” language (correctly), which is directly connected to an inferior intelligence and to a savage, uncultured being. All of these things serve the negative image of the Afro-descendant as portrayed through dominant ideology, and thus facilitate a disassociation of the self with this Other. Language, particularly in a literary text, is an excellent vehicle to emphasize difference, and it may explain why, despite otherwise overwhelming similarities (poverty, misery, bad working conditions, exploitation, even shared culture such as cock fights or participation in vodou ceremonies), Dominican characters are able to discriminate against their migrant

³⁹ Derrida asserts that language does not belong to anyone, it cannot be possessed or appropriated, not even by the “masters” who claim it to be theirs (23-24).

counterparts, distinguishing themselves through language. The latter then is one of the vehicles that deliver the difference between black Others and Dominicans that is propagated by the elites. We shall also not forget that it was this very medium that served as a death sentence to those who failed to correctly pronounce the word *perejil* during the 1937 Massacre.

1.2 INCIPIENT IDEOLOGICAL FISSURES: AMBIVALENT ANIMALIZATION AND UNITY IN MISERY

Now that it has been established that the language that Haitian and *cocolo* characters are ascribed to use in the text sets them apart, let me return to look at some of the elements that differentiate them, all the while still reiterating their common difference vis-à-vis their Dominican counterparts, particularly focusing on their race. They are represented as not only child-like, but also animal-like, particularly those who originate in the Western part of Hispaniola. Metaphors and similes like “Penetran por todas partes como las plagas de insectos” (Moscoso Puello 110) and “Los cortadores parecen cuervos enormes manchando el verde de la caña. La mayoría son haitianos” (Moscoso Puello 165), already quoted above, underscore the animal-like and inferior nature of the migrant workers, emphasizing their blackness as well as the way in which they are perceived as an undistinguishable mass, rather than as individual subjects. The first quote appears in the part of the text that describes the *cocolos*, while the second refers to all cane cutters. However, while both groups are certainly attributed with animal-like qualities, they often differ in intensity as well as in where they are located in the spectrum between animal and human. The “animalization” of the Haitian characters is very repetitive in the text: “a los haitianos y a Maruca [la mula del mayordomo Chencho] les gusta lo dulce, vale. Por eso es tan

mañosa como ellos” (101). They arrive at the plantation “en guaguas pintorescas [...] semejan jaulas” (107).⁴⁰ Meanwhile, the depiction of the West Indian’s boat ride from the Minor Antilles is idealized, and thereby—as Lancelot Cowie points out—romanticizing the Middle Passage and the experience of slavery itself (15): “han pasado sus noches, contemplando el bello cielo del Caribe, sin sentir el dolor de sus abuelos” (109). The *cocolos* are represented as having evolved from and overcome their condition of former slaves, in other words, becoming “more civilized.”

Repeatedly, the migrants from Western Hispaniola are depicted as obedient and pliable, while the *cocolos* are “menos dociles que los haitianos,” (Moscoso Puello 110) that is to say that they are tenacious. However, the reverse is also true: the contrast between their very black skin and their white teeth, for example, is emphasized in the description of both, but while Haitians have “dentaduras fuertes, amenazadoras” (Moscoso Puello 107), those of West Indian origin “enseñan su dentadura blanca, como pulpa de coco, para mostrar alegría” (Moscoso Puello 109). In these two examples the same marker of difference is used in two distinct ways. The latter individuals are depicted as jovial, good-natured creatures, the former are threatening, even monstrous, once again underscoring the apparent difference in their state of evolution towards a civilized existence, as defined by the European ideal. What is most significant is that the qualities attributed to both groups, seemingly emphasizing the difference in civilization between the two, actually contradict each other and, in a certain sense, overlap. As I have shown above, both are stubborn or threatening but docile or friendly at the same time. The narrator describes the *cocolos* as “muchos de ellos ya son dominicanos” (Moscoso Puello 109), but not even a page

⁴⁰ This type of representation demonstrates how the text closely replicates the Hispanophile and anti-Afro ideology prominent at the time of its creation, one inherited from a Spanish-colonial way of thinking that associates Africans with monstrosity and savagery (Fra Molinero 7-8). This discourse served to justify the natural predisposition of the “black” individual as slave. For a more detailed exploration of this subject, please see Fra Molinero’s introduction.

later accuses Blakis of pretending not to understand, commenting that “no queda otro recurso que matarlo o dejarlo” (Moscoso Puello 110). The Haitians have threatening white teeth—monstrous-like—but are much more docile, just like mules. While, at first glance, the discourse about these groups seeks to stigmatize them, yet present the *cocolos* as slightly more civilized (they have, after all, been subject to European colonization for centuries, are “Christianized” and are even referred to as *los ingleses* in a couple of places in the text), it actually achieves quite the opposite: it brings to the fore the *constructed* nature of the differentiation between the distinct groups, and thus—perhaps unintentionally—questions the characteristics the narrator and the characters use to qualify one from the other. This may then present a fissure in the validity and all-encompassing nature of an anti-Afro ideology, illustrating the complexities that are inherent in an attempt to define the Dominican national identity.

According to official discourse, Haitians are the “Other” against which Dominicans define themselves. What can the constructed difference between Haitians and *cocolos* in *Cañas y bueyes* then tell us? For one thing, it shows us that the text’s representation of Afro subjects indeed follows official ideology, because it attempts to represent the Haitian worker—through naming, through his language, through analogies that reduce him to the like of animals—as furthest removed from the Dominican norm, the formerly well-to-do Don Marcial, whose plight is at the center of the plot. Secondly, however, the confusion of characteristics that are supposed to mark the Haitians, but also mark the *cocolos*, on the one hand, and the mixing of those elements that are supposed to differentiate the two on the other make it obvious that these distinctions are absolutely subjective and rooted in racist attitudes against Afro-descendants in general. One might argue that the only reason the Dominicans labeled “negro” are excluded from this equation is that they do not present a “threat” to the locals employed in the cane fields. As

we have seen, they are also marked as blacks, represented as removed from the center in linguistic terms, and described as generally poor, belonging to the bottom ranks of society, even reminded of their slave origins. They are not, however, described as threatening or monstrous. Is it then, after all, a question of mere class and economics? Are racist representations used to mitigate the fear of local workers that “los trabajadores exóticos [...] vienen a quitar el pan” (109)?

In the case of *Cañas y bueyes*, Dominican and Afro-migrant sugar workers share the experience of dwelling at the bottom of society, in a common “class” of exploited laborers. Fixing his gaze on a group comprised of individuals of Dominican, Haitian, and West Indian origin, as clearly indicated by their names, the narrator describes them as “un espectáculo pintoresco. Una colección de sombreros viejos, rotos, sucios. Una riqueza de harapos, que apenas cubran el cuerpo. Un montón de hombres miserables, ignorantes, dejenerados, en los últimos peldaños de la escala humana” (111). This expression may be interpreted by some as a sort of nascent “class consciousness,” as a fissure in a discourse that usually differentiates the groups rather than uniting them. In this particular moment, the narrator observes them all in the exact same state of misery and destitute, without any exceptions.

At the same time, in terms of the class-race matrix in Moscoso Puello’s text, I have shown that despite this shared experience in the lowest echelons of the social hierarchy, the anti-Afro ideology advanced by the dominant classes works in such ways that it helps emphasize the racial difference of the workers, rather than underlining what makes them “equals” in socio-economic terms. As the preceding analysis demonstrates, the Dominican worker characters, as well as the text itself, constantly convey a feeling of “native superiority” towards their migrant co-workers, while the latter are represented in a fashion that underscores this “natural inferiority” propagated

to be inherent in their racial and cultural difference. Ideology then indeed works as the “cement” that holds society together in its current state—as described by Hall. Ideology works as a social glue because it achieves that even the lowest classes identify themselves with those belonging to their own nationality as defined by the dominant classes (Hispanic-Catholic), rather than with those that share their daily fight for survival. Ideology achieves that the responsibility for miserable conditions is deflected away from the local system and its operators (the dominant classes), onto those individuals that it places outside of the boundaries of what it defines as its national identity (particularly those that function as the oppositional pillar to it, that is to say, those defined as “foreign” Afro-descendants).⁴¹ This is particularly exemplified not only in the way that Haitians and *cocolos* are portrayed in the text, but also in the particular loyalty and compassion that the Dominican sugar workers and the narrator express towards Don Marcial, who is in a much better socio-economic position than they are. I will return to this question in the case of *Over* and *Jengibre*, both of which have been described as denouncing the dilemma of the entire class of sugarcane workers, and cane cutters in particular.

1.3 GENDERED IMPOTENCE AND INVISIBILITY

One of human society’s most basic dichotomies—gender—is an intrinsic part of any discussion of racial social dynamics. Etienne Balibar, in his chapter on “Racism and Nationalism,” argues

⁴¹ Naturally, the text also places a large portion of the blame on the North American owners of the sugar plantations. *Cañas y bueyes* was written shortly after the end of the North American occupation of the Dominican Republic (1916-24) when anti-American sentiments were still very high. However, since my analysis focuses on the representation of the Afro subject, the discussion about the U.S. American characters is beyond the scope of this chapter.

that “the phenomenon of ‘depreciation’ and ‘racialization’ which is directed [...] against different social groups [...] (particularly ‘foreign communities’, ‘inferior races’, women and ‘deviants’) presents [...] a historical system of complementary exclusions and dominations which are mutually interconnected” (49). Edward Said points to the image of the West, essentially understood as white, as superior, as the norm, as masculine, rational, moral; and of the Orient (or the non-Western, non-white, hence also including the African and Afro-descendant) as the Other: feminized, eroticized, irrational, immoral. The two essentially make up one of the binaries that drive the organization of the modern world. The female, particularly in a patriarchal society (such as the Dominican Republic under Trujillo, subscribing to a Hispanic-Catholic tradition and with a dictator who presents himself as a “father-figure” of the nation), has mostly been portrayed as the “original Other”, as the opposite of the norm—the masculine. If we follow Said, it then seems logical that such attributes traditionally ascribed to the female Other may also be ascribed to the racial Other (regardless of biological sex). Gender and Race then meet here in the sense that, in Western ideology—especially one that has developed in a colonial context—the Other, as well as the female, are connected to such concepts as nature, barbarity, primitivism, and unpredictability. At the same time, it is juxtaposed to notions of civility, progress, and prudence ascribed to the white and to the masculine. And the latter hence is morally superior, which entitles him to a dominant position. We may then say that the Other, or in our case more specifically the Afro-descendant, is feminized in Western discourse, in order to justify his subordination and discrimination.

We have already seen how in *Cañas y bueyes*, through the use of narrative techniques and through language itself, Haitian and *cocolo* characters are represented as less intelligent, as child-like, as animalistic or savage, either in a monstrous or in a docile way. According to Said’s

definition of the West as masculine and the Other as feminine, it could then be said that these subjects have been feminized, regardless of their biological gender. It is of relevance that in Moscoso Puello's text, the male migrant workers are portrayed as almost asexual beings, this is to say that the hypersexualization that is often part of the representation of Afro-descendants—essentially a function of quelling the “competition” they embody as possible partners in reproduction—is largely absent. This may be explained by several factors: first, the novel is focused on the plight of the sugar worker, largely male; and the competition that the native employee suffers in the presence of the migrants who will work for less. Second, Haitians and *cocolos* are depicted as true migrants, with family and reproductive ties to their home countries, to which many return between harvests during the dead season. And third, sexual prowess may actually confer them a sort of agency around the sugar fields, an “edge” in this male-dominated environment, which, as we have seen so far, is not in the interest of a narration that largely seeks to represent black migrants as child-like inferior creatures.

All of the characters considered until now have been male. What, however, happens to the female characters? How are they represented, especially the Afro-descendant ones? What kind of gaze is placed upon them? Do they have any kind of agency? How does the race/gender matrix play out in this case? As bell hooks points out: “racism and sexism are interlocking systems of domination which uphold and sustain one another” (cited in Wade 20). A woman's value is therefore judged on the basis of racial appearance, as well as on the basis of gender, making her a “double-Other”. In an environment shaped by an ideology built upon the embrace of Hispanic-Catholic ideals such as patriarchy, the ideal female is a submissive reproductive vessel and a guardian of family honor. In this environment, coupled with a demonization of

everything considered Afro, we may then expect to find a racialized-sexualized gaze driving the representation of women.

In the first part of *Cañas y bueyes*, when the narrator is reminiscing about the past and recounting the region's slow conversion into a sugar plantation, some female characters are present, mainly depicted as old women, sometimes widowed, who are dependent on the help of men to help sustain them and their small plots of subsistence agriculture (like Anastasia), or as childbearing wives of local men. Their roles are rather tangential, leaving very fleeting impressions, as if they were merely decorations. This section of the text is supposed to describe the lost utopia of a past Dominican nation where everything was as it should be, when foreigners were not "contaminating" the lives of ordinary people. Hence, all of these women are presumably considered to be Dominican, and they are not acting out against the norm, which explains the text's silence about their racial makeup (with the exception of Anastasia's little granddaughter, who is described as "oscura" and "negrita" (54). An old woman like Anastasia—already way past her reproductive years, so no longer a sexual object or a possible bearer of shame—does get a few opportunities at expressing herself directly. However, she uses them to lament the situation in which ordinary Dominicans find themselves due to the expansion of the *ingenio*, reiterating the same critiques the text is proposing, not necessarily taking up agency. Younger women do not speak for themselves; they are tangentially referred to in their roles as wives and mothers.

The main part of the plot, taking place in the cane fields, strikes the reader particularly due to the almost complete absence of female characters. Two women—Justina and Juana—are mentioned in the text, and the narrator's way of describing them clearly objectifies them in a racial and sexual way. Don Marcial's cook Justina was "[a]lta, elegante, de color claro, de pelo

negro, lustroso [...] Los ojos hermosos y brillantes, inteligentes. Cuerpo bien formado, de curvas expresivas” (194). All her worth is placed in her appearance, according to local beauty standards. She is light-skinned, young, feminine, and fertile (she already has a son). The reader never finds out whether *she* is interested in the character Benesclao; we only learn about his infatuation with her, and that after a few months, he takes her away on a mule at daybreak (if by or against her will remains unclear). The other young woman I mentioned above—Severo Marte’s daughter—is described in similar terms: “Juana era joven. Apenas tenía diez y ocho años. Ancha de caderas, de color claro, buen pelo y con unos ojos negros y hermosos” (196). In sum, we find here something similar to what Sybille Fischer talks about in relation to the popular story of the Virgins of Galindo: women are passive objects of the male gaze; they are suspended and displayed for the purpose of that gaze, without their own distinctive thoughts (173).

Since in this novel, women are reduced to being sexual objects fit for reproduction, it is not surprising that we do not find any mentioning of Haitian or *cocolo* female characters. The presence of “Other” females would potentially complicate a plot constructed upon a clear ideological foundation with the help of a large number of minimally developed characters. It would require the text to address questions of desire, sexual abuse, offspring, and racial mixing with the “undesirable,” among other things. The lack of females makes it easier to maintain the plot’s simple internal structure. (This even applies to the two main protagonists: Don Marcial’s family is tucked away in a far town, and Rosendo does not seem to have any romantic ties.) And if male Haitian and *cocolo* characters are delegated to the margins of society and the plot itself, their female counterparts vanish completely out of the view, marking their place in the invisible periphery of the nation.

In sum, the migrant Afro subject's depiction in this novel is mostly informed by the predominant ideological positions of the period in which the text was published. The text's basic structure, the narrator's position and attitude, the marking of the Haitian and *cocolo* characters as nameless and black, and the use of language and direct dialogue all suggest an underlying anti-Afro and Hispanophile current. Stereotypes suggesting that these characters are ignorant, animal-like, and savage are reiterated throughout the text. Yet, even within this early text, there are a few exceptions that interrupt this overwhelming ideological undercurrent. One such occasion is the acknowledgement by one Dominican character that the nation is home to a mixed-race population of many shades, and that difference in color matters (counter to a discourse of racial harmony that depicts the Dominican Republic as a paradise for people of all colors, due to an early demise of the plantation system). The narrator, at one point, also describes all cane cutters, regardless of origin, as members of the same miserable group. And finally, another much more implicit than explicit fissure is the contradiction that can be found in the way the text represents Haitians and *cocolos* as docile and threatening at the same time, mixing and confusing the same arguments to justify one or the other characteristic. While these deviations from the ideological center of *Cañas y bueyes* are minimal in comparison to those textual elements that conform to the dominant anti-Afro discourse, they do help complicate the reductive notion of a simplified antagonistic relationship between Dominican identity and Afro-descent, where the latter is necessarily defined as foreign to the former.

2.0 CHAPTER TWO

OVER: THE WORLD OF SUGAR FROM THE MOST DOMINICAN POSITION

All of the texts that form part of this chapter have to be considered keeping in mind the oppressive environment of their creation, and the ever-present threat of censorship and possible state violence against the author. This is particularly true in the case of Marrero Aristy's novel *Over*, especially given the proximity of the publication date to the Massacre of 1937, and the author's presence within the Dominican Republic rather than in exile. During the late 1930s, the writer was on relatively good terms with the Trujillo regime, but Berta Graciano suggests that this shall not necessarily imply that he shared the same political and ideological convictions as the dictator (60). The general critical consensus seems to be that this text seeks to denounce the situation of many ordinary Dominicans, the life and suffering of those who are confined to work in the foreign-owned sugar industry. While this argument holds true to a certain extent, I contend that despite this intended social critique, the text is primarily built upon an ideological anti-Afro discourse based on an opposition to all things and individuals Haitian, one that sees blackness and Afro culture as inferior and as a threat to Dominicanness. However, as in *Cañas y bueyes*, this underlying ideological current is on a few occasions interrupted by fissures that diminish the absoluteness of dominant discourse and hint at the simultaneous presence of alternative and more Afro-inclusive perspectives.

The plot of *Over* focuses particularly on the life of the *peones* who dwell on the sugar plantation, and lacks the element of the *colono* that was of great importance in *Cañas y bueyes*. Given these factors, the presence and centrality of the Afro subject, particularly of Haitian and *cocolo* migrant workers, increases compared to Moscoso Puello's text. The narration is mainly linear, and in contrast to the former text, there is an almost equal balance between narration and direct dialogue. This is naturally related to another difference between this text and *Cañas y bueyes*: the perspective and involvement of the narrator with the story. Daniel Comprés, *Over*'s main protagonist, is at the same time the novel's first person narrator.⁴² This has a number of effects: first, that the reader tends to identify more readily with this voice, and second, that from the outset, one may expect the text's discourse to be more subjective. The narrative voice is therefore endowed with a great potential to steer the discourse in accordance with its own opinions, this is to say that its way of seeing the world will dominate the general message that emanates from the text. In theory, this position of power within the text would allow for a critical advancement of a perspective other than one based on dominant ideology. However, as the following analysis will show, Haitians and *cocolos* are represented in a manner that while the plight they share with most exploited workers in the sugar industry may inspire compassion in the reader, they continue to represent the negative image of the Afro-Other, with one exception that I will discuss in more detail. Similar to *Cañas y bueyes*, those Dominicans who find themselves in a subordinated position in the *batey* —including Daniel—rather than fraternizing

⁴² *Over*, according to Berta Graciano, has even been studied as a biography of its author. Marrero Aristy himself, at a rather young age, worked as a *bodeguero* in the sugar estate *La Romana* (57, 63). This may suggest a reflection of the author's position in the narrator, in terms of ideology, class etc.

with the foreign migrant worker, they participate in the “superexplotación del haitiano a favor de la creencia de pertenecer a una clase/raza privilegiada” (Heredia 134).

Over is narrated in the “here and now” not in retrospective like *Cañas y bueyes*. There is no direct mention of the time period or the place where the plot develops; the text never escapes the containment of its own fictitious reality (Graciano 60). While this may be a technique to avoid censorship, it may also be a way to universalize the experience in the sugarfields, as it is not restricted to a uniquely Dominican space. Doris Sommer claims that the text’s organizational structure and ensuing mood follows the movement of the *zafra*,⁴³ with its expectations at the outset and the bleak reality of unfulfilled hopes of prosperity at the end (*One Master* 133). Daniel, although as *bodeguero* in a somewhat better position than the cane cutters who make up the majority of his customers, shares this emotional cycle with them, as it also reflects the ups and downs of his own experience. This then presents one point of connection where he shares a similar emotional experience with the majority of his customers. However, an utterly significant factor in this consideration is the place where Daniel positions himself socially, based on his bourgeois background. This positioning is key in understanding the ideological underpinnings of the character of the *bodeguero*, and by extension the relationship between him and his customers, even as he approaches a state where the (economic) difference between him and the cane cutters is almost indistinguishable. Linda Martin Alcoff refers to this privileged positioning of someone who intends to speak for or about the Other as follows: “[Any] statement will invoke the structures of power allied with the social location of the speaker, aside from the speaker’s intentions or attempts to avoid such invocations” (105). This can be applied to the case of

⁴³ The period of the sugar harvest is referred to as the *zafra*.

Daniel—in his simultaneous role of protagonist and narrator—and the way he relates to and views the cane cutters, who are mostly, albeit not exclusively, foreign migrant workers.

Consequentially, *Over's* protagonist speaks from a position *above* the Others, even as he himself is subject to the same exploitation by the sugar industry. The enunciations about his customers, even when he laments their excruciating plight or attempts to show empathy with their situation, take on what I would call a semi-paternalistic tone. For example, when he talks about the anguish that the worker's misery causes him, he exclaims: “por mi mente desfian escenas que ponen de relieve su desorientación, su ignorancia —¡su eterna ignorancia!—su necesidad de que se les compadezca y se les permita vivir como seres humanos” (Marrero Aristy 69). Already in this first quote it becomes apparent that these workers lack any kind of agency, that they need to *be permitted* to live like human beings. They are totally dependent and ignorant, and deserve to be pitied. Their *ignorance* is a theme that will continuously be alluded to throughout the narrative, especially in connection to Haitian migrants. Particularly towards the beginning of his stay on the sugar estate, Daniel paints himself in a completely different light, as someone who is actively shaping his own life. He will attempt to keep looking forward, to remain hopeful and look at his job as temporary rather than life-defining. In opposition to how he views his own situation, he refers to the cane cutters as “these men” (“estos hombres” in the original), “que envejecen y mueren sin otra vision que la de estos campos de caña, arrastrados por un fatalismo que se les filtra hasta la médula” (Marrero Aristy 96). Daniel even proceeds to hold them responsible for his own future change of attitude, as if their lack of hope and the apparently lethargic acceptance of their plight were in part to blame for the spiritual degradation he experiences as the plot progresses.

The tone of the novel illustrates how the protagonist's curious and somewhat hopeful mental and emotional state continues to deteriorate to finally reflect the depressed, down-beaten and fatalistic mood of resignation he initially criticizes in the other workers (see quote above). The constantly increasing pessimism about the future that grows larger as the story develops is reminiscent of the atmosphere in *Cañas y bueyes*. The tone then serves as an indicator of how the difference between the narrator and those he considers inferior continuously diminishes, and therefore runs counter to the feelings of Dominican superiority expressed through Daniel's utterances and through the way black migrant workers are represented in the text. In this sense, the tone may be considered one of the fissures in an otherwise almost solid ideological undercurrent that predicates opposition between Dominican and foreign Afro-descendant workers on the sugar estate, as it slowly eliminates the differences between them acknowledging the similarity of their desperate and hopeless situation.

Despite his own precarious financial situation and the fact that he has to cheat others who are even worse off than he is in order to survive, the *bodeguero* reports, in a somewhat denigrating tone, that “¡siempre están suspirando los trabajadores—sobre todo los haitianos—por ver dinero en sus manos aunque sea a costa de un ojo” (Marrero Aristy 158). It almost sounds like the attitude of an affluent person who says that money is not important in life, and looks down upon poor people who see money as the only way to escape their misery. Daniel does not realize that in reality, he is much closer to the position of the latter, while he maintains the mindset of the former. Daniel's attitude of difference towards the cane cutters becomes absolutely clear when his wife is admitted to the hospital, and he becomes outraged because they placed her with the other peons rather than in a more adequate room (due to his social status). He

even makes a reference to his former bourgeois life when he says that “Usted me conoce, indudablemente. Nos hemos visto en el pueblo. Ahora soy el bodeguero Daniel Comprés” (177).

Undeniably, there is a difference between Daniel and the sugar workers based on their relative backgrounds, but not so much in terms of their situation as presented in the text. Daniel comes to the *batey* because he needs to get back on his feet after losing access to his relatively comfortable life when his father expelled him from his house, while the migrant cane cutters come pursuing the dream of a better life. However, the similarities are greater than the differences: for both, the work in the *ingenio* is a last resort, not a situation of choice but one of necessity. Both enter with the illusion that it is a temporary job, not a life-absorbing commitment. Both are exploited by the company, live in less than adequate circumstances, are at the whim of their superiors, and face the constant risk of being replaced without other viable alternatives for employment. And while Daniel realizes this to a certain point—notably in his conversations with other *bodegueros* and in his fervent discourse about the exploitation that oils and drives the foreign-owned sugar machinery—it does not lead him to overcome his own ideological predispositions against the migrants who work as cane cutters. It is significant to note that when he complains about the *braceros*, it is generally directed at those who are not Dominican nationals. Instead of seeing the parallels between himself and the black migrant workers, he attaches himself to a vision of his former self that allows him to focus on the difference with those whom he considers to be Others. The following quote best describes this middle-class, or in-between, place that he feels he belongs to: “No creí jamás que a tan corta distancia de mi casa, y después de haber formado tan bonitos planes sobre mi porvenir, me vería en la necesidad de servir a éstos y de obedecer a otros a quienes he de considerar mis amos absolutos” (Marrero Aristy 52). As the ensuing analysis will show, his ideological position in

this respect is complex, not only driven by socio-economic but also by a perceived *racial* difference. The reader, rather than the narrator-protagonist, may become aware of this disjuncture between Daniel's vision-of-self and Daniel's real position, which is one of the ways in which the text may actually point towards a fissure in the definition of Dominicaness.

As I have already pointed out above, the protagonist's viewpoint is instrumental to the way foreign migrant workers are represented in the narrative, due to his unique positioning as the first-person narrator. The way that he emphasizes the difference between himself and "them" is then significant in the sense that it reveals the ideological undercurrent of the whole text, one that on the one hand criticizes the denigrating treatment of all those employed by the white North American and European appropriators of the sugar industry, yet on the other hand takes up an attitude of superiority towards those foreigners deemed to be Afro-descendants (Haitians and *cocolos*).

Let me now return to the idea of marked and unmarked racial categories in the text, a concept already discussed in relation to *Cañas y bueyes*. Clearly, the Dominican, as a creature of presumably mixed racial heritage, presents an unmarked category, while those considered whites and blacks are marked, albeit in a different fashion. The whites are looked at with contempt, because they are considered to act in overconfident and rigid ways. The term "blanco" is used exclusively in reference to the foreign owners and administrators, who are the direct beneficiaries of the exploitation that takes place on the sugar estate. To be white functions as a synonym for living comfortably, for being greedy, for exploitation, but above all, for an all-encompassing power over those at the bottom of the food chain: "sabido es que los blancos son infalibles y que no rectifican órdenes" (Marrero Aristy 44) or "Los blancos llegaban unos tras otros en veloces y cómodos automóviles. [...Ellos] dan órdenes" (Marrero Aristy 125). White is

also associated with being “racist” and “inhuman,” given that with a few exceptions such as Mr. Norton, the *blancos* do not interact with or even look at those who are not their counterparts (Sommer *One Master* 145).

The racial superiority complex of the whites is sharply criticized through the character Valerio’s furious discourse, who says that they are “cegados por su fiebre de atesorar dinero, y empeñados en conceptos de superioridad racial” (Marrero Aristy 206). It is significant that the white person’s racism is severely criticized, but that there is no apparent consciousness of the Dominicans’ own repeating of the same practices towards black migrant workers. This inability for objective self-evaluation could be read as a sign of how engrained and anchored these prejudices were in the Dominican imaginary of the time.

White characters are referred to by the title “*Mister*” and their surname, reminding the reader of their superior position in the socio-economic hierarchy of the plantation, despite the overall critical attitude towards their actions. Generally speaking, the narrator-protagonist Daniel uses a bitter, often sarcastic kind of tone when he talks about the whites and their different ways of achieving a level of economic comfort at the expense of everyone else. These characters are rather flat in their depiction; the reader does not learn any details about their lives or personality beyond those that function to illustrate the fact that they are ruthless and money-hungry exploiters.

The Afro subject—the second marked category in the text—is generally represented with pity and a certain arrogance, not unlike the contemptuousness with which the whites are said to act. Black characters, with one exception that I will examine further on in this analysis, are also depicted in a flat and generalized way. It is telling that a differentiation is made between whites and Dominicans and blacks and Dominicans, suggesting that Dominicans are of a mixed

heritage, something we have already seen in *Cañas y bueyes*. However, those subjects considered to be black (and thus foreign, since blacks and Dominicans are different) are represented in a derogatory fashion; they are belittled in cultural and intellectual terms and portrayed as inherently inferior human beings. Meanwhile the whites are criticized for the economic exploitation of local resources (a position that should be reserved for Dominicans), rather than for a “natural” flaw in their being as a whole as is suggested by the criticism towards blacks. This shows that the text’s own position tends to be much closer to that of the national identity discourse of the period, one that privileges Dominican proximity to whiteness, and creates a myth of racial mixture with a long gone indigenous entity, all in order to supplant and negate an African heritage. Furthermore, the narrative as a whole directs its criticisms outwards, as Doris Sommer has explained. This perspective in itself does not provide opportunity for extensive and self-critical self-examination, which also explains its adherence to the already existing ideological predispositions mentioned above.

2.1 MEMORIES OF SLAVERY

There are various references to slavery in the text. It becomes clear that when the narrator-protagonist talks about slavery, he connects it to the migrant workers (admitting that Dominicans were related to former slaves would mean directly admitting their relationship with these Others, whether it be historical or as a genealogy). The experience of slavery itself, according to Daniel, has robbed these subjects of the will and capacity to rebel against the way the workers were being treated on the plantation: “Esas gentes vienen de Haití y de las islas inglesas todo los años [...] y no pueden—aunque no tuvieran la esclavitud de siglos en el alma, y aún poseyeran

capacidad—pensar en reformas” (Marrero Aristy 68). This passage suggests—implicitly—that they are still behaving according to the code their ancestors first learned when they were forcibly brought over to the New World, preventing them from thinking about how to change their situation for the better.

There are a couple of passages in the text that may even seem suggestive of a common past of slavery. An earlier mentioned quote (Marrero Aristy 82)—paralleling the white man’s pleasure of watching recent arrivals of black laborers with that of his slave-holding and whipping grandfather—follows an inventory of different groups of foreign and Dominican laborers and their illusions at the outset of the *zafra*. This choice of placement in the text ties together the plight of foreign and domestic employees, and hints at a shared positioning at the whim of the master. It could be interpreted as an ever-so-slight suggestion at the commonalities, rather than the differences, between Dominicans and migrant Afro workers, one that, as I have argued earlier, the attentive reader could perceive between Daniel and his customers.

On the other hand, while Daniel talks about all kinds of different positions—including his own—when he mentions the hope that elates everyone at the beginning of the harvest, he makes sure to tie the slave experience directly to the “recently arrived blacks,” who are equated to Africans up for sale in the market. The quote directly exposes the relationship of master and slave by juxtaposing the black “herds” to the white man contemplating them. The black subject arriving to work in the *zafra* is therefore reduced to the status of an animal (as part of a herd), as some kind of merchandise that can be bought and sold. In a sense, this quote, rather than acknowledging a common African past, reiterates the Afro subjects’ place in the narrator-protagonist’s worldview: they still occupy the position of slaves, and the fact that they have “recently arrived” hints at their foreign origin (and evokes images of the Middle Passage, tying

them directly to the African continent). While this quote suggests a hidden, but not very direct, criticism of the white character, at the same time it reiterates and reconfirms the notion of the Afro subject as a foreigner, as a slave, and as inherently inferior to and different from the Dominican individual. As we have seen earlier in this analysis, the character Eduardo affirms that the ideas of Bartolomé de las Casas—the intellectual father of the Atlantic slave trade—can be continued to be implemented in much cheaper and easier form with Haitians and *cocolos* (Marrero Aristy 103), further stressing their image as modern slaves, while positioning the Dominican outside of this group by not mentioning him in this context.

The reference to the black subject as newcomer also presents a historical inaccuracy, because African subjects had arrived on the Eastern part of the island since the beginning of the Atlantic Slave Trade. By masking this historical reality in order to make the Afro presence in *Quisqueya* look recent, the text reproduces the negation of an Afro past and heritage, which forms part of dominant discourse.

At one point, however, this very negation is questioned by what I consider a fissure. Daniel makes another direct reference to slavery in the later parts of the text, when his luck has turned sour. “Blancos insolentes, rojos de *whiskey*, que nos miran como el amo a su esclavo” (Marrero Aristy 197). The interesting thing about this passage is the mood and the tone. While in the quote cited above the reader senses some irony, this time around the tone is aggressive, annoyed, passionately critical. And the reason for this vehemence is obvious: this time, the whites are looking at *us* as if we were slaves. They include *us*, the Dominicans, in the group that up until now was, in Daniel’s eyes, comprised of black migrant workers. The narrator-protagonist here directly puts into words that to the whites, all of the estate’s workers are the same, and uses the term slave in direct reference to Dominicans. This is quite a shift from a

worldview that differentiated between “them” and “us,” which explains the furious attitude of the speaker. While up to now he has criticized the general exploitation taking place at the hands of the North American and European owners, he had reserved the connotation of “slave”—the lowest strata of the socio-economic hierarchy—for migrant Afro subjects. Now he himself utters this remark that places Dominicans in the same position, but continues to immediately tie his rejection of this extreme exploitation to his own people :“Mi pueblo, ¡oh mi pueblo!” is exclaimed right after the word “esclavo” (Marrero Aristy 197). Once again, when he associates Haitians and *cocolos* with slaves, a sense of pity or slight irony can be detected in the text, but never the same outcry as in the quote mentioned above. What these preceding quotes suggest then is Daniel’s continued negation of a historical connection with the Atlantic slave trade, and through this denial, with an Afro-Dominican heritage, resembling the dominant ideology at the time of the novel’s publication. However, the textual presence of the reason for Daniel’s outrage—the suggestion of such a common heritage to the reader—can be considered a fissure in *Over*’s adherence to dominant ideology.

In the fabric of the text, the color of the skin is directly tied to the condition of the slave, reserved for migrant cane cutters. In this next section I will outline how the marking of “black” further emphasizes this claim. From early on in Daniel’s carrer as a *bodeguero*, he refers to the migrant cane cutters as “los negros.” On many occasions, the description of “los negros” is accompanied by a reference that echoes some of the stereotypes that we have already seen in *Cañas y bueyes*: being submissive, frightened, docile, animalesque, and lacking intelligence. It may then be said that the concept of “black” not only serves as a reference to racial belonging outside of the norm, but also that the way it is used in the text directly evokes certain characteristics that the narrative voice attaches to those it considers to be part of this group. At

one point, while Daniel is conversing with the character Cleto (the local policeman), a group of Haitians decides to stay back from the store's counter in fear of the authority. The narrator-protagonist refers to them as "los negros [que] obedecen temerosos, con una sonrisa servil que solicita disculpa" (Marrero Aristy 36). They are represented in a way that suggests that they have internalized and accepted their inferior status, and act according to their anxiety. Later on, in December, Daniel talks about the arrival of Haitians and *cocolos*, and once again describes them as "los pobres negros [que] están molidos, indefensos, y se dejan arrear en rebaños." (Marrero Aristy 80) The choice of vocabulary is extremely significant here. As in the earlier reference to black migrants as a "herd," they are equated to animals, here to a flock of sheep; a concept exacerbated by the adjective "helpless," or "vulnerable." In contrast to *Cañas y bueyes*, where the migrant Afro subject's representation alters between posing a threat and childlike innocence, in *Over* the black cane cutters are completely deprived of any agency, they are ignorant and entirely powerless. Are these migrant "sheep" available for sacrifice, if to the benefit of the local community? Are they literally referred to as "black sheep," long seen as marked by the devil? The choice of "rebaño" reveals a type of thinking that reduces the Haitian and *cocolo* workers to caricaturesque animal- or childlike beings, stripping them of their subjecthood.

This effect is deepened by the way that within the text, their color turns them into an unidentifiable mass, not a group of individuals but rather a conglomerate of beings. "Son unos hombres retintos como café tostado. Sus rostros, que se me antojan fondos de calderos viejos, me parecen todos iguales aún a pequeña distancia" (Marrero Aristy 82). The narrator-protagonist is attempting to create distance and difference by invoking something that social psychologists today refer to as the "cross-race effect," suggesting that it is more difficult for people to

recognize faces of people from other races.⁴⁴ By claiming to not be able to distinguish single individuals, the enunciator clearly marks them as different from himself and his group (Dominicans). The comparison with old cooking pots also adds a sense of little or no value to these subjects, reinforcing their relegation to the lowest socio-economic and human scales.

At the end of the *zafra*, many peons get ready to leave and look for work elsewhere. While all—Dominican and foreign workers alike—are disillusioned, the narrator makes it clear that he is speaking specifically about Haitians and *cocolos* when he exclaims that “los negros corrieron como náufragos hacia los vagones [...] y los negros [...] flotaron nuevamente como banderas multicolores” (Marrero Aristy 154-55). Here the idea of the black subject as foreigner—as migrant—is emphasized, suggesting that he will travel back to his place of origin after completing the sugar harvest. The terms “náufragos” and “flotaron” once again establish a semantic connection to a traumatic voyage by ship, underscoring the idea of these subjects as being disoriented, out of control, and helplessly exposed to the will and mercy of the elements, or their future “masters.”

Finally, as we have already seen in *Cañas y bueyes*, the language used in direct dialogue also serves as a way of representing the migrant laborers as inferior and ignorant beings. The way of speaking is also indicative of the place that Daniel assigns to himself in the social hierarchy. The *bodeguero* and all of his colleagues usually use a clear and grammatically correct Spanish, while the speech of other Dominican workers on the estate is represented in rather informal ways, as an idiom full of local coloring, pronunciation, and expressions. In the case of

⁴⁴ This concept was originally coined in psychology, by scholars such as Shepherd; Brigham and Malpass; and Anthony, Cooper, and Mullen (see Sporer 170). I am not necessarily agreeing with the validity of this theory; I am rather probing into the question of what kind of thinking motivated the way the character describes the migrant cane cutters.

the latter, I concur with Doris Sommer's argument that the people's way of speaking is captured along with its intelligence and wit, avoiding the condescension that would mark later writers like Prestol Castillo (*One Master* 147). In the case of the Haitian and *cocolo* migrants, however, I have to disagree with this assertion. The obvious confusions of gender, syntax, and the incapacity to pronounce the Spanish sound "r" (reminiscent of the "perejil" test during the massacre of 1937) makes Haitian speech seem less intelligent: "¡Bodeguel!...¡Bodeguel!...A mi me se olvida el Manteca. Vendeme un poquita" (Marrero Aristy 54) or "Bodeguel, depachá mué. Depachá mué..." (Marrero Aristy 105). When it is time to leave at the end of the *zafra*, the text captures the voices of Haitians and *cocolos* waiting to board the train. Their utterings are once again filled with foreign words and with mistakes in their pronunciation of Spanish, particularly when juxtaposed to the expressions of the Dominican *peones* who are leaving to look for work in the rural areas: "Se acabó la zafra, vale." "Compé, la saf tá fini." "Mi se va pa Saint Kits. Mi no vuelva pa la otra." "Uí, compai, uí." "Qué jace uno vale? Naitico, ná" (Marrero Aristy 152). Heredia concludes that Haitians are reduced to a socio-linguistic condition of pidgin, a limited type of speech that develops through the contact between groups that speak different languages and that has historically been regarded as a sign of inferiority.⁴⁵ She says that "al limitar la

⁴⁵"A pidgin is a restricted language which arises for the purposes of communication between two social groups. [...] Historically, pidgins arose in colonial situations where the representatives of the particular colonial power, officials, tradesmen, sailors, etc., came in contact with natives. The latter developed a jargon when communicating with the former. This resulted in a language on the basis of the colonial language in question and the language or languages of the natives. Such a language was restricted in its range as it served a definite purpose, namely basic communication with the colonists. In the course of several generations such a reduced form of language can become more complex, especially if it develops into the mother tongue of a group of speakers. This latter stage is that of creolisation. Creoles are much expanded versions of pidgins and have arisen in situations in which there was a break in the natural linguistic continuity of a community, for instance on slave plantations in their early years" (Pidgins and Creoles).

condición humana del haitiano a la categoría de pidgin se le mantiene fuera del ámbito social en el que se forjan los significados y donde se llevan a cabo las posibilidades de transformación” (Heredia 135). In agreement with her assertion, I would also include the West Indian migrants into this description, based on the quotes above. In sum, the way in which the speech of Haitians and *cocolos* is represented in the novel adds to their representation as ignorant and child-like, and reinforces the idea that they are outsiders to the Dominican nation.

Until now, I have illustrated how Haitians and *cocolos* are represented in a similar fashion, as an indistinguishable conglomerate of black individuals without agency or wit. However, as we have seen in *Cañas y bueyes*, slight nuances exist within the text that place the Haitians on a lower echelon than their *cocolo* counterparts, revealing the arbitrary nature of how difference between individuals is constructed based on colonial affiliations and ideologies and how these factors together contribute to a nationalism based on a superiority-complex expressed in racial terms.

As I have mentioned above, the Haitian’s pitiful ignorance is the characteristic that stands out most. They are represented as acting with a child-like innocence, “estos infelices [...] hablan sin ningún sentimiento de rencor or de maldad” (Marrero Aristy 42). They have no notion of what is appropriate to say, and what is not. They are harmless, because they do not act with bad intentions. The animalesque nature that was attributed to all black migrant workers as they were called a flock of sheep is exacerbated with the Haitians, who are equated to ruminating oxen: “los haitianos [...] mastican su hambre, como bueyes que se echaran tranquilamente a rumiar” (Marrero Aristy 49). The ox is a work animal that has been castrated in order to be controlled more easily. The use of this simile is significant: the Haitians, as they are represented in this text, have been robbed of any possible agency. This is achieved through deprivation and hunger,

alluded to many times in the text. The Haitian does not chew his *food* twice, but rather his *starvation*. Daniel describes the ugly experiences he has with Haitians who faint from hunger: “un haitiano llamado José Castil [...] se hallaba frente al mostrador, pidiendo, jadeante como un buey.” Once again, he acts like an ox, panting; he then grows ashen and “se desplomó como un fardo,” like an object, not a human being (Marrero Aristy 104). With another young man who faints, Daniel proceeds to scarf food down his throat, commenting that “Parecía un moribundo, ¡pero comía!” (Marrero Aristy 105) Another’s misery is spelled out more in detail, and adds to the image of a pitiful, helpless subject, without any initiative or hope. “De lejos he visto su silueta atada al hierro, como un trapo que flotase a ras de tierra, a merced del rudo implemento que los bueyes arrastran vigorosamente. [...] y cayó de rodillas primero, dando luego con la cara en tierra [...] sus ojos apagados me miraban implorante [...] su mano huesuda, encallecida y sucia” (Marrero Aristy 106).

Adding to this array of stereotypical representation is the frequent allusion to their unpleasant smell, a notion marking the Haitians in the text: Cleto, the local policeman, exclaims “¡Jesú! ¡Qué pete tiene esa gente! [...] ¡Acaben de pasai, jediondo j’ei diablo!” (Marrero Aristy 36). The way that Afro-descendants are said to smell has long been part of a Eurocentric discourse of difference (both in the sense of an exotic eroticism attributed to black women, and in the sense that a supposedly more intense smell makes Afro-descendants more animal-like.) Hence, the utterances by these two Dominican characters therefore reiterate and reinforce the idea that Haitians are unlike them.

The images used in the text, at first sight, do not necessarily evoke the idea of a threat by Haitian migrants, if we associate that threat with violence. However, it certainly reflects the dominant ideology of the day in two ways: on the one hand, by representing Haitians as pacific animals

falls in line with the idea of a “peaceful invasion” propagated by the *trujillato*. On the other hand, this representation closely resembles popular stereotypes that reduce the Afro-descendant to a savage, child-like, and ignorant being, repeating the century-old discourse that served to justify the enslavement and mistreatment of black subjects. I am not arguing that Daniel agrees with the abuse and the injustices that these subjects experience, but rather that the way in which he as narrator-protagonist represents them, follows exactly the same line of thinking.

2.2 NOT AN-OTHER BLACK MIGRANT

The *cocolos* in the text are by no way left out of this difference, as we have seen above. However, they occupy a somewhat different category, because most stereotypical and denigrating enunciations are made directly about Haitians. Furthermore, West Indian migrants are, on occasion, accredited with a larger skill set, and with a higher level of initiative or agency, which is, however, not necessarily described as something positive. “No quiero cocos, porque discuten mucho” says one of the *colonos* at the time of selecting his workers. Another exclaims “¡Sáquenme este maldito, que no quiero abogados!” Daniel clarifies that “generalmente, los ‘abogados’ son cocos que saben leer y conocen el peso de caña” (Marrero Aristy 81). In a somewhat condescending tone, he suggests that the West Indian migrants feel superior to their Haitian counterparts: “los cocos, chapurreando en inglés, parecen significarse como superiores” (Marrero Aristy 84). The *bodeguero* describes that it is more difficult to cheat his coco customers: “aplaco protestas, principalmente de cocos que conocen el peso” (Marrero Aristy 87). We already witnessed the same type of differentiation between Haitian and West Indian sugar workers in *Cañas y bueyes*. While both Afro-descendant groups are looked down

upon, the latter are considered—at least to a certain extent—more instructed, and less helpless than the former. The Haitian therefore remains the exact counterpoint to the ideal predicated by the ideology of the ruling Dominican class, while others, who resemble the Haitian in migrant status and phenotype, are also looked upon with disdain but maybe not quite to the same extent. The dominant classes have less of a necessity to vilify the *cocolos*, as they are not as numerous and do not share the same type of complicated history with the Dominicans. Furthermore, they have never successfully overthrown the ruling classes to proclaim a black republic, so the locals most likely perceive the level of threat emanating from these migrants as significantly lower than that deriving from the Haitians. However, as the *cocolos* share the Haitians' phenotype, and especially in light of the labor organization and protest that took place in the English-speaking Antilles during the 1930s, it was much more beneficial to the elites to lump them together with the Haitians in a group of black foreigners, in order to maintain the focus on their differences with Dominicans and therefore quell any type of solidarity or possible feeling of connection between the exploited foreign and domestic sugar workers, providing cheap labor to an industry that benefitted those on top of the economic and social ladder.

One of *Over's* characters is an exception to all the ways of representation of the Afro subject outlined until now. He forms part of the group of *bodegueros* that meet on Sundays to drink rum and discuss life: the *inglesito* George Brown. The first difference lies in the fact that he actually has a name, and rather than being referred to as a *cocolo*, he has a nickname that in its linguistic make-up expresses affection.⁴⁶ El *inglesito*, according to Daniel, “es otra clase de

⁴⁶ Almost all other characters of Haitian and West Indian descent do not have specific names, but are rather referred to as part of an anonymous and often condescending group term, such as “el haitianaje” or the “*cocolos*.” Within such description, at one point a random collection of names

sujeto. Negro, con treintidós dientes perfectos” (Marrero Aristy 100). Unlike O/other Afro-migrants, he is somewhat well-informed, he speaks perfect Spanish, and he reads books and magazines in two languages. He arrives in the Dominican Republic by chance, as the sole survivor of sunken sailboat going from Cuba to the English-speaking islands. He is not a simple unskilled worker who came to the sugar plantation for lack of an alternative; he arrived there by miracle, defying a life-threatening situation that, according to the narrative, five hundred *cocolos* did not survive. In sum, the *inglesito* is almost Dominican and says that he wants to improve his Spanish despite the fact that his Spanish can only be differentiated from that of spoken by the natives “por un ligero aire extranjero” (Marrero Aristy 101). That he shares the Dominicans’ worldview is underscored by the fact that he refers to black migrant workers as “inmigraciones de esclavos” and asks: “nosotros, cuándo cambiaremos nuestro estado de esclavos?” (Marrero Aristy 102). More importantly, he reiterates the position that “mis paisanos [...] en ellos hallo una terrible ceguera que es hija de trescientos y más años de esclavitud” (Marrero Aristy 101), linking their condition to the internalized experience of slavery. He does not only limit them to the status of slaves proscribed by the sugar industry’s exploitation, but in addition talks about a slave mentality, thereby further confirming what dominant ideological discourse claims: a direct association of the Afro subject—particularly the foreign one—with the concept of slave. I am not merely referring to the physical reduction to the status of exploited servant, but rather argue that *el inglesito*’s way of representing his compatriots conveys their complete physical and mental surrender to this condition, thereby deepening the image of them as powerless and ignorant sub-persons.

appears, but they are not associated with actual individuals: “Ya podrá llamarse Joseph Luis, Miguel Pie, Joe Brown, Peter Wilis o como mejor desee” (81).

Daniel obviously values George Brown because of the latter's desire and his drive to integrate himself into Dominican society. In this case, it appears that class identity overcomes racial identity; the narrator-protagonist identifies with the *inglesito* because they both have had some schooling, and within the sugar plantation they occupy similar positions above the simple cane cutters. In other words, the migrant does not embody the reality of hunger, misery, and impotence that Daniel fears and despises as he himself becomes absorbed into the spiraling process leading to his own demise. The *inglesito* presents a more positive outlook for the future, one that does not necessarily equate an Afro-migrant identity with a slow and miserable death as a modern slave. However, there may be another reason why, in the structure of the text, Daniel and George Brown are allowed to appreciate each other.

I have already mentioned Doris Sommer's assertion that *Over* projects all the guilt for the misery of the sugar workers and the racial discrimination in the Dominican Republic onto the North American proprietors, and thereby absolves Trujillo's regime and his followers from any responsibility. In light of this position of displacement, the discourse appropriated by the *inglesito* could also be read as a veiled critique against the Hispanophile attitude adopted and exacerbated by the *trujillato*, if we substitute "English" with "Spanish." The *inglesito* criticizes how his compatriots blindly revere a colonial power that invented and instilled in them a complex of racial inferiority in order to keep them enslaved for centuries and prevent them from forming their own nation. He points out how the values of this colonial entity—particularly those of racial hierarchies—are so ingrained in their minds despite the fact that a *cocolo* will never benefit from them, "ya que nadie puede ser inglés sin ser blanco" (Marrero Aristy 101). May this be a call to the Dominicans to reevaluate their own set of values, to become more critical of the Hispanic ideal they have accepted for themselves, and to become conscious of their own ties to

slavery?⁴⁷ Does Marrero-Aristy choose the *inglesito* to pronounce this discourse because he is almost Dominican without being one? Is he trying to show that Afro subjects, after all, are not as different from the Dominicans as dominant ideology suggests? The author's choice of a well-spoken and educated black migrant subject is key here. His act of fiercely criticizing the racism and the indoctrination inherent in the colonial-style system marks the *inglesito's* discourse as a clear fissure in the otherwise coherent representation of black migrants as muted, ignorant, and impotent subjects. The essay-like nature of his discussion is very suggestive in this respect, given that the genre of the *ensayo's* principal purpose is to convince the reader of a certain viewpoint or perspective. Marrero Aristy may be suggesting to the Dominican reader to reconsider whom he should identify with, and used this literary style in order to be more persuasive.

This type of interpretation does not negate the argument that I have made thus far, suggesting that in the way the text represents foreign Afro subjects; the stereotypes and the prejudices predicated by dominant ideological discourse are reiterated. Along with a few other fissures that I have identified in the novel—such as the tone diminishing Daniel's difference, the positioning of a reference to the slave-owning grandfather, and the realization that all are looked upon as slaves by the whites—this fissure should be considered as a factor that reveals the inherent complexity of the issue. It may even point to a nascent attempt at the interrogation of anti-Afro discourse in the Dominican Republic. It may be a first evolutionary step towards an opening in the rigid ideology, one that—as I argue in the second section of this thesis—some recent authors are trying to take at the beginning of the twenty-first century.

⁴⁷ While the history of slavery in the Dominican Republic is certainly different from that of the minor Antilles (as has been discussed in the introductory chapter), we shall also remember that during the brief period in the middle of the nineteenth century when the country returned to being a Spanish colony, slavery was *reinstated*, despite a prior abolition under Haitian rule, at a time when many other Latin American countries had already made slavery illegal.

2.3 A FEW CONSIDERATIONS ABOUT AFRO-DOMINICANS AND FEMALE CHARACTERS

This brings us to the important question of how Afro-Dominican characters are referred to in the text. A few references to local black subjects exist, however they generally do not take on the derogatory tone used when the text refers to Haitians or West Indians. The character of the Dionesio, for example, is referred to by Daniel as “el negrazo” (Marrero Aristy 46), his son is “el negrito hijo suyo [...] su cuerpo de ébano brillando a los rayos del sol” (Marrero Aristy 49). Dionesio occupies the position of *mayordomo*, not a cane cutter; in short, it is clear that he occupies a different position than the black migrant workers. The references to his phenotype are limited to the two occasions cited above, the rest of the time the character is referred to by his name.

As Aída Heredia has rightly pointed out, Eduardo, another *bodeguero* who forms part of the Sunday group, does not include the black Dominican in his understanding of the oppression of blacks in general (Heredia 139). His exclamation about Father Las Casas’s ideas, already cited and analyzed above, clearly delegates the slave-like exploitation of Africans to Haitians and *cocolos*. In a similar fashion as in *Cañas y bueyes*, black Dominicans are rather marginal to the narrative. They remain out of focus, their very limited presence keeping in line with a discourse that seeks to invisibilize Afro heritage in *Quisqueya*. Yet, at the same time, Afro-Dominicans become visible on these restricted occasions, and in these instances do not belong to an explicitly separate category from other Dominicans. All of this suggests that the text cannot escape the complexities related to race relations in Dominican society, as its representation of those deemed to be true Afro subjects remains tied to Haitian and West Indian migrant characters, but at the

same time fails to prescribe to a complete negation of an Afro culture and genealogy within Dominican history and culture.

The final issue to be addressed, albeit briefly, is that of women. Female characters are relatively scarce, appearing only a little more frequently in *Over* than in *Cañas y bueyes*. In a general sense, they are only defined through the male character, as servant-spouses or sexual objects, and have to bear the brunt of the man's frustrations and bitterness.⁴⁸ Similar to Moscoso Puello's text, the beauty standard of a woman is defined as light-skinned, "una mujer blanca, muy bella." Any coloring in skin-tone is described as "indio" rather than suggesting an Afro-heritage: "era una indiecita radiante, color de canela" (Marrero Aristy 114).

Women are described as "pobres mujercitas que sólo saben obedecer como bueyes o chillar como pájaros" (Marrero Aristy 218). As one of the very few women who speak throughout the entire narrative, Daniel's nameless wife reiterates and confirms her place in the text's universe: "es que me tienes por más ignorante de lo que soy, no me aprecias, para ti soy un animal.[...] ¡Para ti soy una bestia!" (Marrero Aristy 187). From the outset, women then occupy the same position that is ascribed to black migrant workers: they are animals (as in *Cañas y bueyes*, it could be said that black migrant males are feminized). Daniel's wife, however, at least has the chance to denounce how she is treated, and with the help of her family successfully "divorces" her husband. The women considered to be black are not as fortunate; they do not speak at all. They largely occupy a textual silence, are delegated to a status of invisibility. *Cocolo* females do not appear at all, and the few references made to Haitian women are condescending and derogatory: "en el batey [...] sólo se encuentran haitianas feas y grajosas que

⁴⁸ For a more in-depth analysis of the relationship between Daniel and his wife, see Graciano, pages 61ff.

nada me inspiran” (Marrero Aristy 112). When Daniel hires a Haitian woman to help him around the house, he has no positive words to describe her: “La negra y grajosa mujer no sabía cocinar, ni tenía costumbres, ni la más leve noción de lo que significaba limpieza” (Marrero Aristy 181). This type of discourse emphasizes the notion that women in general are of a lesser value than a human being; the Afro-descendant woman is doubly unworthy because she does not even fulfill the functions her status as a female animal requires of her: that of a sexual object, and that of managing the household. It therefore fits a textual universe that is structured through complex hierarchical relationships determined by race, gender, and class that mirror the dominant class’s ideology.

In sum, the Afro subject’s representation within the text, apart from an acknowledgement of their miserable plight as sugar workers, is based on the stereotypes common to the time of the writing of the novel: emphasizing their physical blackness, they are depicted as ignorant, child- or animal-like, and most of all pitiful, rather than as real subjects. If we accept the idea that the plantation in *Over* stands as a metaphor for the Dominican Republic as a whole, “esta república que es el central” (Marrero Aristy 29), it could certainly be read as a criticism of the status quo, particularly in the way that it depicts the still existing colonial racial hierarchies, where the whites are on top and those considered blacks dwell on the bottom. The text, while depicting the injustices and discrimination against those in the lowest ranks, does nothing to remedy or counter the stereotypes on which this rejection is based, but rather reiterates these typecasts through the way it represents the migrant Afro subjects who make up this group. However, it can be said that despite this general ideological undercurrent, a few small fissures become visible, especially as the reader goes beyond a literal interpretation of what is said. This includes attention to the tone that diminishes differences between black migrants and locals contrary to the narrator-

protagonist's vision, a very subtle suggestion at a common history of slavery, and, most importantly, the discourse pronounced by the *inglesito*. The fact that a foreign Afro-subject is represented as capable of speaking correct Spanish, as being educated, and as the one whom pronounces a critical discourse against those in power and against a system built upon colonial structures, presents a clear fissure in the overall dominant anti-black migrant tone that informs the rest of the narrative. Heredia has pointed to another opening in the sense that the text questions white supremacy rather than affirming it (136). How Afro-Others are being treated in Dominican society also becomes a subject of scrutiny (although the regular Dominican is, as Sommer observes, absolved from any kind of racist guilt as the blame is placed entirely on the Americans). All of these elements challenge the notion of an all-encompassing official ideological discourse, and of an absolute Dominican national identity as exclusively based on a rejection of the Afro subject. Despite the fact that the overall representation of black subjects limits itself to reducing them to ignorant and helpless migrant workers—be it in order to avoid censorship or because of the author's personal conviction—thin but significant fissures in this ideological assumption are visible in *Over*, and may function as the seeds of larger challenges that will be expressed more clearly in Stanley's and Matos Moquete's texts, which are analyzed in Chapters four and five, respectively.

3.0 CHAPTER THREE

ARCHETYPES OF PROLETARIAN FUNCTION: CHARACTERS OF AFRICAN DESCENT IN *JENGIBRE*

Of the three authors of the sugarcane novels, Pedro Andrés Pérez Cabral was the most openly subversive against the Trujillo regime. Some of his dissident activities included coediting the Journal *Recta* (1936), his participation in the first student strike in Trujillo's era as director of the *escuela normal* de San Pedro de Macorís (a position he held from 1936 to 1938) leading to his incarceration, and the counter-regime discourse he pronounced at the 1937 coronation of Thelma García Trujillo as *Miss Deporte* (Céspedes 37). Due to these and other activities he was forced into exile in 1939, to Caracas, Venezuela, where he published *Jengibre* in 1940. Pérez Cabral's anti-Trujillo sentiment is deeply reflected in this text, which carries out a profound criticism of the dictator and his surrounding "aparato nativo" (Céspedes 42) of corrupt elites and violent military guards who are driven by blind ambition and oppress others at will. This text, given its place of publication away from the reaches of Dominican censorship, combined with the ideological position of its creator, bears great potential to be subversive in the way that it represents the Afro subject vis-à-vis the official Dominican anti-black ideology of its day. This is to say we might expect to find a lesser tendency than in *Cañas y bueyes* or in *Over* to present this subject in the ways that it has been defined by the elites (as savage, or ignorant, or threatening to

Dominican national unity and consolidation). As the ensuing analysis shows, the Afro subject is represented as an integral part of the Dominican nation,⁴⁹ but as one relegated to dwelling at the bottom of society due to elite-centered politics that ensure the persistence of social structures dating back to the colonial era. *Jengibre* reveals and blames differences in class for the miserable living conditions of the sugar workers, rather than the racism inherent in such structures. The link to racial prejudice, however, is still exposed —maybe unintentionally—in the narrative, for instance through the way in which the elites look down on and refer to the black and poor workers, and also through the textual insistence on their ethnic group. And while Pérez Cabral's narrative reveals a number of important fissures in the dominant ideology—among them the fact that black characters are represented as real subjects, and are even given a certain agency (particularly when compared to their depiction in *Cañas y bueyes* and in *Over*)—the text does not completely escape the stereotypes and anti-Haitianism predicated by the elites, as we shall see in analysis of the treatment of Haitian characters and also in the local Afro Dominicans' impotence to defend themselves against the arbitrariness employed by those in power.

Jengibre's plot unfolds in a few basic settings: the barrio *Los Asuntos*, populated by the sugarcane workers, the canefields, the town (where the wealthy administrators and professionals work and live), and the military headquarters and Trujillo's residence in the capital. "Haitianos, cocos, dominicanos, yankis, españoles sirven de actantes y de hilos conductores del relato a

⁴⁹ Pérez Cabral would later write the relatively unknown essay *La comunidad mulata* (1967), where he claims that the Dominican Republic is the only true *mulato* nation, a fact that he describes as the real essence of *dominicanidad*. He profoundly questions and sharply criticizes both the Hispanophile and anti-Haitian tendencies that have long informed Dominican identity formation, but at the same time, according to Norberto James, in plain pessimist fashion, places the blame for the suffering experienced during the *Trujillato* on the people's own passive, servile, and cowardly nature (59). See James's dissertation for details about the relationship he establishes between Pérez Cabral's two works.

fin de radiografiar, a través de sus respectivas vivencias, el enclave azucarero” (Céspedes 46). The sugar workers actually occupy at least half of the narrative, and within that half, the Afro-Dominican experience is at the center. The representation of the *cocolos* is largely tied to their role as intelligent and passionate strike organizers; they seem to have achieved a certain level of acceptance or belonging in the community. The Haitians occupy a rather marginal position in the narrative, but they are most definitely depicted as “different,” as a separate group. Overall, the characters fit rather neatly into the respective classes they represent, and act according to their social standing. As Luis Alberto Sánchez observes, all characters fulfill a certain archetype. He points out that Mr. Answer is the imperialist exploiter, the doctor Herrera is the corrupt *criollo*, Charlie Prandy—whose actions in the novel are important but carried out through letters and word-of-mouth (he never actually appears personally in the plot)—is the alert *cocolo* worker with a real working class conscience (578). We may add Cipriano to this equation: he represents the exploited and frustrated Afro-Dominican on the bottom of the social ladder, who decides to take violent action against the ultimate culprit—Trujillo—even if that means sacrificing his own life. The gullible but at the same time opportunistic Enerio belongs to the same group, but chooses the only intra-systemic way out of the misery, in exchange for his conscience: he joins Trujillo’s police force. There are no Haitian characters with individual names; they are represented as a group devoid of an identity within the community. From this short overview, it already becomes apparent how character representations correspond precisely to the archetypes of different social groups; they are not complicated or questioned by the text. Furthermore, as both Céspedes and James point out that this novel does not have a central protagonist or hero, but rather a central social class, made up of the incipient Dominican proletariat that is organizing a strike and resistance against the Yankee enclave and the oppression by the Trujillo regime (Céspedes 46,

James 48). Both of these characteristics facilitate Pérez Cabral's criticism of the status quo, a denunciation inspired by Marxist ideology and based on the difference between the proletariat and the bourgeoisie, with little importance given to racial and cultural factors that shape the exploitation of the first group by the second one. This does not mean, however, that these aspects play a less significant role in the matrix of factors that may explain the situation and socio-economic standing of the sugar workers.

The narration is chronologically linear, and alternates between the different settings and, consequentially, their different populations and classes. The book is divided into ten chapters, and the transition from one scenario to the next is often abrupt and sudden, reminiscent of cinematic cuts (James 47). The narrator is rather acrid and blunt in his descriptions. His mode of relating the story is by no means objective, but rather opinionated. He expresses his preferences and critiques openly through the way in which he describes certain individuals and situations, for example the district attorney who gained his position through nepotism, or the oppressive poverty that renders the conversation between the lovers Juana and Taringo taciturn (James 78). The narrator's dogmatic demeanor may be intended to convince the reader by pushing him to adopt a counter-position towards the ruling classes described in the text. However, at the same time, it may inspire a process of questioning such a rigid and subjective manner of recounting the fictional events, because in a way the narrator is employing some of the same techniques as the system he is criticizing: severity, the separation of people into simplistic binaries of "us" and "them," and the pursuance of convincing the reader that "they" carry the guilt for the present situation. Naturally, the way in which these groups are defined differs, but the similarity in structure calls attention to possible underlying ideological connections that may not be immediately apparent. In general terms, it may be said that "they" in the text are defined as

those classified as the bourgeoisie, while in Trujillo's ideology, "they" are the Haitians. What we will see in the textual analysis is that the latter definition may not be exclusive to Trujillo's ideology, and may, in the way these subjects are represented, present a second "they" category within *Jengibre*'s narrative fabric. How is this negotiated in the text? How does the novel, generally perceived as an anti-Trujillo text, negotiate its own ideological shortfalls? As I have already mentioned in the section about critical reactions to the novels, James argues that some of Trujillo's ideological principles are visible undercurrents of Pérez Cabral's novel, including anti-Haitianism and hispanophilia (52). If we accept both James's notion as well as the idea that this text was written in an anti-regime context, this analysis seeks to pinpoint to what extent the representation of Afro subjects in the text replicates its day's mainstream ideology, and where it reveals—at times possibly unintentionally (if we subscribe to the idea of a single ideological motivation on part of the writer) —the complications and fissures within that ideology and its real-life manifestations.

3.1 FISSURES EXPOSED THROUGH ROLE-REVERSAL AND FLAWS IN CHARACTER

The narrator's verbal sting and his blatant use of irony underscore and comment on the difficult realities the reader is confronted with through the verbal exchanges between the text's main characters. Dialogue is rather abundant in *Jengibre*, particularly when compared to *Cañas y bueyes* and to *Over*. It is within this dialogue that the text most clearly defines the relationship between victim and perpetrator, between powerful and powerless, a dynamic that is directly tied to one's affiliation with those dominant classes that Pérez Cabral is seeking to criticize. The text

contains a number of dialogic situations that clearly differentiate between the victim and the perpetrator, categorizing each participant unmistakably. This helps consolidate the binary of exploited/exploiter making up the fabric of the novel's intended social critique. Such situations include, for example, the conversation between the local girl Juana and her employer—the Spaniard José Rodríguez—right before he proceeds to rape her (Pérez Cabral 56). It also includes the dialogue that the same Spaniard has with his secretary Luis Ureña when he fires him for a trifle (Pérez Cabral 114); the exchange between the worker Prudencio Macario's widow and the Señor Gerente in the moment when the latter negates her the life insurance benefits for her husband and proceeds to insult her suggesting she should prostitute herself (89-90), as well as the condescending manner in which the local priest treats Cipriano when he asks for help with his daughter's funeral arrangements (Pérez Cabral 174-75).

However, the text contains a second type of dialogue, one that takes place between members of the same social group, which tends to reinforce the binaries of victim and perpetrator, but this time in the sense of group belonging to the former or the latter. In other words, when these verbal exchanges occur between members of the bourgeoisie, as for example the negotiations between Mr. Answer and José Rodríguez (Pérez Cabral 51-53), both parties are represented in a negative light. They are greedy, corrupt, and condescending in their attitudes towards the lower classes. Those dialogues between members of the lower classes—or the incipient proletariat—point to the hardships they have experienced because of the actions of the members of the bourgeoisie. These include, for example, the conversation between the cane cutter Taringo and Cipriano's daughter Juana, who are talking about the exploitation of the sugarcane workers by their own people (Pérez Cabral 60-62); or the dialogue between Justino

and Cipriano about how the latter lost his family, his land, and his cattle, taken by the government's soldiers (Pérez Cabral 63-68).

Nonetheless, at least one example of a dialogue—a set of defining verbal exchanges in relation to the whole text, embodying, amongst other things, its circularity—escapes such clear-cut binaries of “good” and “evil,” of “innocent” and “guilty.” I am referring to the opening and closing scenes between the characters Cipriano and Enerio. Not only are the roles of power questioned and reversed from the first to the last scene, but it is clear that in a sense, both characters fulfill the roles of victim and of perpetrator (Céspedes 46). In the initial scene, Cipriano fiercely expresses his contempt for Trujillo's police force and for Enerio's decision to join them. The older character clearly occupies the more powerful position in this exchange, and warns his younger compatriot—who up to this point has been like a son to him—of how a membership in the *guardia* will spoil his being. Cipriano urges Enerio not to set foot on his doorstep should he follow through with the decision to become one of Trujillo's henchmen (Pérez Cabral 41-42). Enerio, in the last scene, does not heed to this threat and surprises a somewhat intoxicated Cipriano, who has been drinking to augment his courage to carry out an attack on the *Generalísimo*. The young soldier, feeling empowered by his uniform and the promise of a higher rank, proceeds to kill his mentor, thus—in a sense—fulfilling the old man's prophecy of moral corruption (198-99).

Above, I have briefly mentioned Cipriano's plan to kill the dictator, which makes him a potential perpetrator, as he subscribes to a violent solution to the violent exploitation suffered by those that belong to his class. Enerio, in his youth and in his place at the bottom of society, has also been a victim of systematic corruption. This is shown in the text through references to his ignorance such as “tan pronto que aprenda a firmar” (Pérez Cabral 42) and describing his

professional skills as “*tocai la guitarra*” (Pérez Cabral 85). The fact that he is so easily swayed solely by the promise of three stripes—which leads him to exclaim that he would even kill his own father—speaks about his weak personality, but also about the lack of alternative opportunities to better his life (Pérez Cabral 181). These two characters complicate the notion of easily applied categories, and help diffuse any otherwise strictly opposing divisions between “good” and “evil.” So while the overall narration and most of the characters are designed to highlight a binary relationship between the elites and the working class—in a sense vilifying and idealizing them, respectively—a closer reading reveals that such simplistic and rigid categorizations are artificial. Attributing fixed moralities to specific groups may ultimately facilitate the process of social critique, but a text that pretends to directly criticize reality through the depiction of a version of that reality cannot escape the latter’s complexities entirely. This includes, as this example should demonstrate, the ambiguities that real humans embody. It may also be argued that the complication of fixed and simplistic categories such as evil, good, innocent, or guilty presents a fissure in the text’s adherence to Trujillo’s ideology, which is built upon rigid stereotypes, because it questions such rigid typecasts’ applicability beyond the theoretical-ideological context.

The strategic placement of these two dialogues at the beginning and at the end of the narrative, on the one hand, serves as a framework for the general disillusion that the text expresses in regards to the proletariat: they are ultimately bound for failure. Norberto James attributes this fact to what he refers to as “rampant pessimism,” which is one of the elements that formed part of Trujillo’s ideology and that is now also nourishing this narrative (52). The idea of disillusion applies to the older generation, represented by Cipriano, that possesses a social conscience and a sense for justice, but that is worn down by a life full of hardship and has

succumbed to alcohol as a temporary escape. It also applies to the younger generation that has lost any sense of responsibility and direction and is intoxicated by the imagined possibility of acquiring power. Both finally subscribe to individual violence as the ultimate solution—something that we could refer to as “negative agency,” in the sense that they are actively making a choice about their personal path (it could be argued that at least some form of agency is present in the Afro Dominican characters of this text, particularly in comparison with the earlier two novels in this cycle).

These two scenes are particularly significant for this analysis for another reason, since they also draw an interesting parallelism between a Dominican and a Haitian subject. At the very beginning of the novel, during the conversation Cipriano has with Enerio, he describes the corruption and fraud with which Trujillo’s militiamen seek out personal benefit. He goes on to saying that “yo prefiero lo ’haitiano” (Pérez Cabral 41). This reference, on the one hand, reiterates that Haitians are held in low regard by the protagonist, since he compares them to the corrupt individuals he despises, basically assigning the two to the same category. At the same time he vilifies his own compatriots, he discredits the threat that supposedly emanates from the Haitians and the idea of a peaceful invasion propagated by the Dominican elites of his time, by explaining that the real menace to the nation originates from within. Even more interesting is how the text represents the resemblance of both Enerio’s and one particular Haitian (who does not have a name) characters. In other words, the unfavorable stereotypes ascribed to Haitian subjects (some of which we have already seen reiterated in the other two novels)—among them an animalistic nature, an incessant desire to make money, even through unscrupulous means,⁵⁰

⁵⁰ We may remember that in *Over*, the narrator explained that the Haitians would go so far as eating only dirt just to save all their money to take it home (169).

and finally cowardice—are not just characteristics of the undervalued foreign Afro subject, but also of the young, lower-class Dominican who puts himself at the service of Trujillo. The Haitian is described as follows in the penultimate scene of the text, shortly before Enerio proceeds to kill Cipriano: “Habían enviado a un haitiano que se brindó a ello, para espiar la actitud de los braceros. Negro, pedazo mismo de la noche rodándose entre los arbustos, brujo y mañoso, sorprendió el descuido de los de arriba, arrastrándose con la respiración atada a la astucia crecida entre los montes. Al regresar, fatigoso, quiere recibir un premio dando satisfacción a la milicia cobarde mientras extiende la mano abierta de su aliento” (Pérez Cabral 194). The Haitian is referred to in subhuman terms. He is described as an animal cunningly advancing in a familiar terrain, without any kind of conscience and only motivated by the material reward for his betrayal. He gives the workers away for the only five dollars, a small amount considering the number of lives this information puts at peril. Enerio also sells another’s life for very little: merely the *promise* (we do not know if it will materialize) of three stripes is enough for him to kill his own father’s best friend, who has been a paternal figure to him until he entered Trujillo’s militia. The lack of conscience evidenced by this act and by Enerio’s claim that he would even kill his own father to move up in the military ranks dehumanize him; one could say that it makes him animal-like, just like the Haitian. And finally, both characters act in a cowardly manner: the Haitian, when he refuses to move past a certain point as he leads the militia up to their bloody encounter with the striking workers, presumably because he wants to stay out of the line of fire; and Enerio, when he launches his surprise attack on the old and inebriated Cipriano, without giving him the slightest chance to defend himself. If we read these two characters in terms of a nation-building project, it becomes clear that both the Haitian *and* the younger Dominican generation following Trujillo are perilous to the Dominican future. Such

a depiction could be attributed, as James does, to a reiteration of the general pessimism inherent in the period's ideology. However, I contend that the characters' representation in such a parallel manner actually complicates any clear notion of ideological affiliations on part of the text, as these characters should represent opposite ideological poles. Yet both the Haitian and Trujillo's follower—fundamentally each other's biggest *foe*—are painted in a similar, and more importantly, in a negative, light. Representing the Haitian and Enerio in the same terms eliminates the difference between them; they are, in essence, the same. This then exemplifies another instance or fissure where the text does not conform to elite ideology in the way it represents the lack of a clear-cut binary opposition between Haitians (the Others) and Dominicans. It departs from the otherwise overwhelmingly simplistic good/bad categorization that it applies to the majority of characters, and thereby challenges, at least momentarily, any easy pre-conception of ideology as the principal pillar of identity negotiation. In other words, the process is much more complicated and has as much to do with pre-conceptions and stereotypes (often created and promulgated from above) as it does with real lived circumstances and the opportunities and limits implied by them.

That being said, the scenario discussed in the preceding section leaves us with another question: if neither the Haitian—as the embodiment of cheap Afro-migrant labor—nor Enerio—as a symbol for the generation of young Dominicans who have “fallen” for Trujillo's promises—carry any promise for a Dominican future, who does? The text itself does not provide any definite answer to this question, as all efforts by the “righteous” members of the exploited class in the end prove to be fruitless. Rather than looking towards the promise of a better tomorrow, the novel clings to the nostalgia for a better past. The character Cipriano embodies this melancholic longing; he is, in a sense, a relic from an easier and less deceiving time. He recounts

his modest but honest upbringing: “Mi familia siempre tuvo tierra y rese. Poi supueto, no eran mucha, poique éramo pobre, pero pá viví: taban má que buena! Viendo a pai trabajando en la siembre de vívere y a mama en su ayuda” (Pérez Cabral 65). From the time when Cipriano was a young boy, he learned to defend his land from its main threat: the cattle thieves, whom he referred to as bandits. For a while, things were fine; they were honest and hard-working people living on their own land, staving off the occasional threat of the “bad” elements of society. However, the balance was eventually tipped, and Cipriano’s existence shaken up by the cowardly murder of his frail father. The assassination occurred at the hands of four soldiers who stole the little cattle that had sustained the family, and who eventually forced the young man off his family’s land at the order of their General.

The connection between these robbers and the Dominican situation—as Cipriano describes it—presents a clear image to the reader. The leader of the bandits, called Pepe—short for José—is at the root of the problem, spreading his criminal ways of robbing and killing among the decent population. His son—the General, soon to be president—uses threats and violence to finally take the land away from its righteous owners in order to (ab)use it for himself. While the novel does not name Rafael Trujillo and his father José directly, the allusions to their personae are clear. The rise of the bandits is the beginning of the end for the Dominican nation. Cipriano, before he is killed, then represents the last member of this honest and erect but futureless ideal of a citizen. He has surrendered to alcohol, to *Jengibre*, a spicy liquor that gives him the courage to pronounce sharp criticisms of the regime and the status quo. At the same time, the constant inebriation has worn him down and impaired his judgment to the point that it costs him his own, and, by extension, his daughter’s life, thereby making him, or his “type,” unfit and incapable to lead the future of the nation. In that sense, the text does nothing to remedy the problems the

nation faces, because while it criticizes the current situation and holds the ruling elites and their followers responsible for the detriment of the majority of poor Dominicans, it does not offer any kind of alternative or solution besides a longing for the past that cannot be fulfilled (as do *Cañas y bueyes* and *Over*, each in their own way). So the status quo is irremediable at this point, including the way that Afro subjects are treated by the text, as we have already seen in the above example of the Haitian “traitor.”

3.2 (RACE) NAMING, MARKING, AND LANGUAGE AS TOOLS OF DIFFERENTIATION

Besides the already mentioned character flaws that the text associates with the Haitian as well as with Enerio (an animal-like nature, greed, and cowardice), additional elements of interest that are related to the representation of Afro subjects in the text are the questions of naming, race naming, and marked and unmarked categories. I have previously addressed these notions in the discussion of *Cañas y bueyes* and *Over*. In the case of *Jengibre*, racial categories are marked in a way that reflects the text’s strict division of its characters into groups of exploiters and the exploited. It is noteworthy that those individuals who are Dominican and in a position of power, in other words those *criollos* who belong to what Diógenes Céspedes describes as the “aparato nativo que le sirve de apoyo [al sistema de explotación]” (17), are racially unmarked, meaning that they are not referred to in terms of their phenotype. They function, in the novel’s universe, as the norm that does not need to be explained, and which serves as the principal point of comparison for all who diverge from it. The fact that their racial make-up is not even mentioned also points to the fact that the notion of race in this context has much less to do with phenotype,

and much more to do with socio-economic status and with political identities, in other words, with group belonging. If you do not belong to “us,” to our group, then you will be marked, and racial Othering is a readily accessible tool as it deals with permanent physical characteristics that are difficult to change.

All other characters in the novel—those that do not belong to the “native apparatus” — have specific terms attached to them. The foreign owners and managers of the sugar estate and related businesses are referred to as “esos blancos” (Pérez Cabral 119). I argue that while the references to “those whites” undeniably carries a certain negative charge since these individuals occupy top social positions that the novel seeks to criticize, it is mainly used as a tool of differentiation from the local population, as for example in “miran los dos criollos al rubio” (120). This terminology does not have the same extent of an “Othering” effect as the terms “negro” and “mulato” that are employed in a consistent and utterly repetitive manner to refer to the sugar workers in the lowest echelons (i.e. cane cutters). The frequency with which these latter terms appear in the narrative—coupled with the insistence on the exploitative nature of the work these individuals do—suggests that the text is making a direct connection between skin color and a subject’s quasi-conscription as a slave. The cane fields and the work done in them are directly denoted as “esclavitud” (Pérez Cabral 75). *Jengibre*, when referring to the sugar workers in general, reminds us of *Cañas y bueyes*: “Salpullido de carbon son los negros sobre la papeleta ancha de los cañaverales” (Pérez Cabral 182), as well of *Over*: anonymous crowds, described not by their profession, but as “los negros y las negras” (Pérez Cabral 101, 143). The above quote illustrates directly that the reference to the cane cutters as “negros” applies to all of them, no matter where they are from. Taringo, a Dominican worker, is named in the same paragraph as his Haitian counterparts (Pérez Cabral 182). This is an image that works well for the purpose of the

novel. The insistence on the blackness of the inferior and exploited workers drives home the idea that what is happening in the sugar industry is a modern type of slavery, realized by foreign capitalists and their local cronies, who are only interested in their personal profit; this includes the ruling classes and their executive arm of enforcement that ensures the status quo is maintained and stable.

However, by establishing and insisting on this type of link between blackness/phenotype and exploitation, the text also repeats one of the basic ideological premises that the system relies on: that of the assignment of Afro-descendants to an inferior position, their proximity to the status of slave, their proneness to be exploited, and consequentially their permanent state of powerlessness. While the text emphasizes the economic realities of the sugar working inhabitants of the neighborhood *Los Asuntos*, and divides its characters and society in Marxist terms—into the bourgeoisie and the incipient proletariat—⁵¹ the constant insistence and reference made to the phenotype of those belonging to the second group suggests that being dark-skinned is an undesirable condition because it necessarily delegates the individual to a state of poverty and impotence (particularly in light of the depicted negative outcome of all intents to better their situation). In other words, the novel's representation of the Afro-descendants as poor sugar workers—and particularly the way in which the text insists on repeatedly marking these characters' phenotypes—reinforces the idea of the black subject's condition as slave, therefore in a sense reiterating one of the parameters that justified the Atlantic slave trade and the century-long exploitation of Afro—descendants. At the same time, the act of racially marking these characters while leaving other Dominicans unmarked—those who affiliate themselves with the

⁵¹ For a more detailed Marxist analysis of *Jengibre*, please see Diogenes Céspedes and Norberto James.

regime and the exploiters—emphasizes the former’s place outside of the circle of belonging, thereby further cementing their identity as Others (their neighborhood is also separate from the rest of the *pueblo*, adding a geographical dimension to the racial and socio-economic marginalization). This could very well be read as a textual tool to criticize the situation of the sugar workers by stressing their extreme alienation and dreadful poverty; however, at the same time it reiterates the ideological foundations of the black subject as a slave, as the ultimate Other. This is then one more example of how ingrained the ideological realities are even in a writer who explicitly seeks to criticize them, and points away from simplistic binaries but towards the complexity of the subject of race relations and ideologies in the Dominican Republic.

Now, the terminology referring to Afro-descendants in the text varies, as does the type of connotation it carries. Taringo, the Dominican sugarworker who aspires to be Juana’s boyfriend, uses “mi negra” as a term of endearment, and also when he expresses his respect for the *cocolo* leader Charlie Prandy he says that “es’era un negro de letra.” In this instance, the text suggests a certain sense of community or belonging to the same group. In the same context, Taringo reveals that his criollo supervisor has called him “negro é mieida” and placed him in the same inferior category as the Haitian workers (Pérez Cabral 61-62). This example shows that the terminology’s effect ultimately depends on the context and the enunciator’s social position vis-à-vis the individual to whom the term is applied. In *Jengibre*, a positive use of racial terminology is very limited; the quote by Taringo that is cited above being one of the few instances where it is employed in such a way. Most others, particularly the locals that are of a higher social standing, use the term “negro” in a condescending way, describing someone they consider insignificant or of lesser value. In one case, they speak of “el negro aquel que se cayó del tren” (Pérez Cabral 89); in another instance the insurance agent addresses Prudencio Macario’s widow as “negra

vieja” (Pérez Cabral 90). The doctor Herrera calls any inhabitant of a poor *barrio* “un negro de esos,” and the Generalísimo himself refers to those he considers provincial and inferior as “ya me hartan tantos negros berreando para que les den empleos” (Pérez Cabral 154). The cane cutter’s overseer—with much of the same attitude that I have already discussed in reference to the contempt of many *criollo* sugarworkers towards their Haitian and *cocolo* colleagues in *Cañas y bueyes* and in *Over*—repeats stereotypes that disdainfully places them all in a homogeneous group. He says “que lo negro no se enfeiman, balsa e pendejo” (Pérez Cabral 134). The foregoing examples rather unmistakably reveal the social positioning of the character that refers to another in racial terms, and whether the former considers the latter his equal or his inferior.

This is not so clear in the case of the narrator, who seems to use terms such as “negro/a” and “mulato/a” rather interchangeably when he talks about the poor Dominicans who live in the *barrio* (it should be noted that he always uses the term “negro/a” to refer to Haitians and *cocolos*). However, at closer examination, it becomes apparent that in the narrator’s discourse, a similar rule applies. When the individual being talked about is seen in an elevated position, he or she may be referred to as “mulato/a,” but when s/he is in a less powerful position vis-à-vis the other person, the term is always “negro/a.” Juana is the best example to illustrate this point. She is described as a “mulata” for the first part of the book, a young and assiduous girl who has preserved her family’s honor. Her youth and her virginity make her an object of desire, a jewel to be paraded around the neighborhood on Sunday, therefore in a sense giving her a certain value, a certain power. However, from the moment on that she finally admits to her family that her former employer—the Spaniard José Rodríguez—has assaulted her, the narrator starts referring to her as “la negra ofendida” (Pérez Cabral 124). From here on out, she becomes the victim. She is reduced to the position of the powerless slave, as the attack is undeniably an allusion to the

historical male master–female slave relationship. Juana becomes the symbol of her family’s disgrace and lost hope, the target of nasty neighborhood gossip. When she falls, when her value declines, the narrator “blackens” her through his choice of terminology. It is clear that once again blackness is associated with inferiority, with a lack of power: a discourse in line with the ideology propagated by the elites. And while the text may be using this insistence to highlight the hopeless situation of the “incipient proletariat,” of those belonging to the poorest class at the bottom of the socio-economic scale, it does so once again confirming and utilizing one of the ideological underpinnings that make the system work: the idea that black is undesirable, and that it is something that does not belong within the imagined Dominican nation.

In general terms, personal names are a symbol of status in the text. As we have already seen in some of the examples above, those that consider themselves superior refer to their Others with racialized terms, and the use of names is generally reserved for a conversation of equals. The narrator does not necessarily differentiate; he uses names for almost all subjects, with the exception for the Haitians, to whom he also refers as if they were a face—and nameless conglomerate. The use of personal names complements the established hierarchies and helps confer the character’s way of perceiving his own identity in relation to the individual he is speaking to. The fact that the Haitians do not have names represents them as if they were not real subjects, and adds to an image of inferiority and sub-human status, in line with dominant ideology at the time.

Another textual tool to represent difference is language. The predominance of a very much politically charged vocabulary—of subversive content vis-à-vis the capitalist-imperialist system the text seeks to criticize—has already been thoroughly discussed by Diógenes Céspedes, so I will refrain from repeating it here (29-34). Rather, I would like to point to a couple of

additional observations regarding language. The story is narrated in standard Spanish, often in a poetic style that sharply contrasts with the grotesque realities it describes. Cipriano's telling of his family's sad story, already mentioned above, is described as follows: "la lámina de sangre y de agarrones, impresa por Cipriano con tinta de garganta y pinceles de mímica, en el paño de luz que una lámpara de barrio hace flotar a través de la puerta chocera" (Pérez Cabral 68). The sugar harvest is not work, but rather "una rasuración sobre una cara de la tierra. Allí todo se pierde: sale el sudor en hilos de tragedia, sale el aliento capaz de empañar el cristal de la mejora, sale el grito fuerte para hacer caer los frutos, sale la sangre para enrojecer la esperanza, sale el canto para engañar a quienes cantan, y sale la vida" (Pérez Cabral 74). The tragedies and despair lived by the laborers are described in lyrical ways, which helps create an air of contradiction, and thus forms the basis of the criticism that the text is launching against the imperial forces and the Trujillo regime backing them. The text presents the farce of a peaceful and benevolent leader, a prosperous and modern nation, a Dominican ideal rooted in European ancestry, all the while the majority of the population is suffering tremendously. Prudencio Macario's death under the train, a transformative event in various ways, is described as follows:

De pronto, color de sangre, un grito surge debajo de un gran peso. Un grito que sugiere largura, pero que ha sido tronchado, que no ha sido parábola fónica, que no ha podido, por su tiempo trunco, arrojar todo el dolor que de adentro traía. Un pájaro en ascenso cogido por una mano enorme. [...] Mientras, atrás, los muchachos de Prudencio y la negra, mujer y criada, gritan de sorpresa de ver, con otros ojos, como se licuaba en rojo el pan de cada día. (Pérez Cabral 79)

The irony between the cruelty of the situation and the lyricism of the language that describes it stands out without a doubt.

As in the earlier two novels *Cañas y bueyes* and *Over*, the language employed in the novel's dialogues depends on the character's social position, and marks his identity conforming to the system in place. Those who are denominated as “gente decente,” in other words those who receive a paycheck (Pérez Cabral 144), generally speak eloquently and in standard Spanish. There are many examples of this in the novel, among them the doctor Herrera, the province's Governor, the priest, the district attorney, even Trujillo. Is the adherence to standard Spanish in the higher classes part of their self-projection as people of European descent? The text seems to be saying just that, but at the same time reiterates and confirms this identity by letting them speak in the same way as the narrator, and by contrasting this type of speech with those of the lower classes.

The type of elaborate and poetic description of the cruelties of life in the sugar estate—referred to above—is often interrupted by the vernacular exclamation of one of the local characters, highlighting the contrast of an ideal of Castillian Spanish and the local version that is spoken by the lower classes. There are many examples of this in the novel, among them the following, once again referring to the cruel death of Prudencio Macario. The excerpt of the narrator's discourse cited above is much more extensive than the brief sample I have shown, and the poetic description of the train's crushing of the body and the arrival of other sugar workers to the scene is then interrupted by a dialogue: “Fué a Purdencio, ei chuchero é la ‘Pinta’. - Ei probe...- Carajo! - ¡Llévenlo pronto! - ¡Ai pueblo! - No. Aquí é mejoi, ¡si tá sangrando! - Pero, crijtiano, si hoy é lune” (Pérez Cabral 79). Belonging to the “proletariat” is then something that is textually expressed through the use of vernacular language, which reinforces the alienation

that the characters experience from the center of society, and from the ideal that is propagated by the elites, one that distinguishes those in power, in this case linguistically.

Despite the binary division between “us” and “them” (those who work for the system and those who are exploited by it), it is noteworthy that the text’s use of dialogue is consistent with class belonging and reminds the reader that many of those working for Trujillo actually come from the same background as the local sugarworkers (we have already seen this in the example of Enerio). In other words, the local coloring of their speech is very similar to that of the *braceros dominicanos*, as the following example clearly shows: The striking sugar workers, upon being surprised by the militia, exclaim: “Noj han traicionao...¡Vivan loj braceroooo! [...] Asesinoj de....” to which the guards respond: “Aguanten mariconej! Ejto é pa que sepan rejpetá la fueiza” (Pérez Cabral 195). Another dialectic exchange between workers and security guards—right after the latter surprise the former in one of their secret organizing meetings and shoot Marcos, a worker who attacked one of the soldiers—also reveals that both groups speak in the same manner, with the same local vernacular and dialect (Pérez Cabral 98-100). So while the textual fabric marks the sugar workers racially by emphasizing their blackness (as I have already discussed above), it does not do the same for Trujillo’s security forces, despite the fact that the comparable use of language by both groups suggests that they come from a similar cultural and socio-economic background, therefore presumably from a similar racial background as well. This is another example of how the text, while intending to be critical of the Dominican realities under the Trujillo regime, reveals some of the same ideological underpinnings, particularly when it comes to the association of Afro-descent with social inferiority, lack of power, and defeat. So while both groups are linguistically far removed from the center of power—emphasizing their lack of culture and education, of which standard Spanish is an expression—the sugar workers are

socially “blackened” by the text through a persistent emphasis on their condition as Afro-descendants and as poor people, as I have discussed earlier. In other words, the basic contradiction lies in the fact that class and race go hand in hand, but while *Jengibre* is inherently disparaging towards classism, it repeats racist and stereotypical representations of those characters it categorizes as being of Afro descent.

This linguistic distinction is even more peculiar in the case of the few Haitian characters that actually speak in the novel. Following the description of the “traitor” that was sent out to discover and later disclose the position of the striking sugar workers—as quoted above—this subject exclaims in a mix of Spanish and Creole: “Amite le teniente, ils son mirando la rí, et pur tant on pé atacá pur deriér” (Pérez Cabral 194). The negative description of the character as black, animalistic, and bedeviled is then complemented by an infantilizing representation of his speech. These negative stereotypical qualities associated with those originating from the Western part of the island are repeated in the other scene where the latter engage in direct discourse. A number of Haitian workers keep cutting cane despite the strike, and are threatened by the other cane cutters who describe their Haitian counterparts as “loj perro seivilej,” as “adulonej dei diablo,” and finally, as “ejclavo de mieida, traicioneroj.” The narrator himself employs the already familiar comparison to “los bueyes callados en la yunta,” an image that I have already discussed more in detail in the analysis of *Cañas y bueyes*. The Haitians then proceed to plead with the enraged strikers. Their only mutterings are a few fragments of a mixture of broken Spanish inflected by Creole: “Papasite, papasite, no me mat, papasit... [...] C’est le diable, papasit...” (Pérez Cabral 185-86). It shows the Haitians in an inferior position, begging the “superior” Dominicans to let them live, doing so with a language far removed from the one that symbolizes the Spanish ideal and center of power, which refers to the devil. Language therefore

reinforces the negative ideological charge and stereotypes associated with the Haitians in concordance with dominant ideology, and alienates them by reiterating their slave-like condition at the very bottom of the local hierarchy, similar to the one depicted in *Cañas y bueyes* and in *Over*. In other words, the text does nothing to mitigate or change the place these subjects traditionally occupy in Dominican society, and by extension in the majority of literary production up to that point.

The reason I have not yet mentioned the West Indian migrant workers in relation to language is rather simple: they do not engage in any direct dialogue in the novel. They are generally “talked about,” a fact that in itself speaks about their lower place in the local hierarchy. Taringo does make one allusion to the fact that they speak English: “tó lo que deijo es’inglé” (Pérez Cabral 62). The *cocolo*’s function within the text is limited to that of being a capable strike-organizer, of possessing what Diógenes Céspedes calls “conciencia de clase” (49), one of the basic elements of Marxist thought. The novel does not reveal any other details specific to the *cocolo* life. They generally blend into the masses of black sugar workers, and only stand out when they use their abilities and talent to organize the laborers.⁵² This very talent makes the *cocolo* an immediate target for the wealthy elites, because they attempt to rid themselves of those

⁵² During the 1930s, a number of labor rebellions on sugar plantations swept through the British Caribbean, among them an uprising of sugar workers in St. Kitts in 1935, one of the islands where a great number of *cocolo* migrants to the Dominican Republic originated. This resulted in the legalization of trade unions in all of the British islands, and most importantly, gave the workers the confidence that they could gain greater political leverage by uniting their forces (see Richard Hart’s *Labor Rebellions of the 1930s*). Even prior to that, during the early 1920s, labor protests—usually led by black subjects from the English Caribbean colonies—had become a regular occurrence on San Pedro de Macorís’s sugar estates, the longest occurring in March and April of 1920, resulting in a few wage concessions (Mayes 95, 102). These historical events surely helped inspire Pérez Cabral’s depiction of West Indian characters that had already achieved the class consciousness that he imagined necessary for the development of a real Dominican proletariat.

who try to incite rebellion, like Charlie Prandy. As Taringo reports: “Chaly, ei cocolo que no deján ni cobrai un pago [...] ni’han duró do semana. Un día en ei coite le trajién la odien de dirse y ei memso Cónsul lo llevó pál pueblo” (Pérez Cabral 61-62). His actions are perceived as a true threat by the exploiters, and that’s why they have to get rid off him, also turning his case into an example for the others: if they do not want to loose their poor wages, they better not organize. Charlie is not represented as another ignorant and uneducated cane cutter, but rather referred to as “un negro de letra. Hombre que hablaba veidá y bonito” (62). The indirect discourse he pronounces through Taringo’s words is reminiscent of that of the *inglesito* in *Over*: “Que la unión jace la fueiza [...] que lo blanco adueñao no son má que uno pillo dei imperialijmo; que si’eso blanco taban apoyao poi lo gobieino y no quisiean oino a demanda debíamo declarai la jueiga” (62). Later in the text Charlie speaks again, through a letter read by the local Eulogio, one of the few individuals who know how to read. The image presented of the *cocolo* is much more positive and less tinged by stereotypes than that of the Haitians. His discourse also reveals a certain power and agency, because even though he is not physically present, his message remains, and the workers do attempt to organize themselves. However, it is still clear—because this subject can only speak through his Dominican “interpreter”, because he was easily removed from the scene, and because he is not a full character but only fulfills one specific role—that he occupies a lower place in society than even his local counterparts. Furthermore, the imperialistic elites—who are supported by the “aparato nativo” made up of the regime, its executive arm, and the *criollo* bourgeoisie—refer to the *cocolos* as merchandise, reducing them, like their Haitian counterparts, to the condition of slaves. The American Mr. Answer, while negotiating sugar prices with the Spaniard José Rodríguez, exclaims: “La repatriación de haitianos nos ha

obligado a *importar* barloventinos” (52, emphasis mine).⁵³ The only difference between the two that can be observed during this exchange—and it does carry some significance—is that the *cocolos* were somewhat successful in their negotiation of higher wages, albeit with the help from the colonial metropolis London (diminishing their own agency). The Haitians were successfully prevented from earning the same raise (53). Overall, both Haitians and *cocolos* remain at the very bottom of the social fabric, the former farthest removed from the center of power and value, the latter a bit closer to it. Afro subjects, including local ones, are continuously alienated in the text, and associated with a status that is undesirable.

In sum, the social hierarchies propagated by Trujillo’s ideology, and manifested—with the exception of a few fissures that I have pointed to—in *Cañas y bueyes* and in *Over*, seem rather similar in Pérez Cabral’s text; and a national identity that alienates Afro-subjects, including migrants, is left largely untouched by the criticism *Jengibre* seeks to exercise.

3.3 INTERROGATING SPANISH IDEALS OF PATRIARCHY AND CATHOLICISM

The following section will be dedicated to a limited discussion of gender,⁵⁴ as a third element that jointly with race and class carries significance for questions of social hierarchies and

⁵³ As I have mentioned earlier in this analysis, the term “repatriación” may be read as a reference to the Massacre of 1937, and reveals, on the one hand, an allegiance of the foreign capitalists to the regime that executed *El corte*, since they choose to use a neutral term instead of a negatively charged one. On the other hand, it also reveals the little value that Haitians have as persons for these businessmen; it is blatantly obvious that they are nothing more than extremely cheap labor, easily replaceable with other “importable slaves.”

⁵⁴ A more extensive discussion surpasses the scope of this analysis, and may make a good topic for a future project. For a more in-depth discussion of the “secret history of gender” and Hispanic nationalism in a historical context please see Mayes’ chapters four and six. Maja Horn,

discrimination. I have previously mentioned a certain “feminization” of the Afro subject in Moscoso Puello’s and Marrero Aristy’s novels, primarily emphasizing their political impotence and intellectual as well as socio-economic inferiority vis-à-vis those in better positions. I have also discussed how the Haitian and *cocolo* characters were depicted as quasi-asexual beings. In *Jengibre*, the picture is somewhat different. It should be clear from the analysis that *cocolos* are endowed with a certain political agency in this text, as their role as experienced strike-organizers is particularly emphasized. They even encourage the locals to start advocating for their own rights, and to take measures to attain them. In other words, the *cocolos* do not suffer from the same level of political and economical impotence as their Haitian counterparts, yet because of a textual representation that is limited to their role in labor uprisings, they are represented without any references to their sexuality. The Haitians, on the other hand, are represented as hypersexualized, at least on one occasion: “Y sólo algunos haitianos enardecidos por las pelas con que surcaron de caminos los cuerpos de sus negras durante la noche pasada, está en el allegro de los picadores.” Even so, the masculinity of all those who are cutting cane, whether local or migrant, is shortly after directly attacked by the overseers: “Aviven la cosa, mariconej” (Pérez Cabral 182). This terminology (also used when the guards end the strike at the very end of the novel, already quoted above) directly feminizes all of the workers, thus highlighting the Afro subjects’ undesirable and inferior position, one enhanced through racial marking and language, as we have already seen. Gender, thus, is an aspect of social structure, rather than a set of individual attributes (Horn 12). The same goes for race and class, as the discussion up to now has suggested.

in her recent book titled *Masculinity after Trujillo* (2014), also makes a significant inquiry into the meaning of gender in Dominican literature.

The women characters in *Jengibre* are more abundant than in the two previously analyzed texts, but many of the textual references about women reflect the same sexist and objectifying ideas, often bordering on or directly evoking the stereotype of the prostitute. The woman is an object of man's desire, as the mere choice of the narrator's words demonstrates in following example that is supposed to criticize the guard's disrespect for the local man who has already "claimed" his partner: "No importa que la mejor hembra esté ocupada: la guardia tiene derecho a manosearla" (Pérez Cabral 178). The woman is something to be "occupied," to be handled. The woman remains a marginal subject, defined by motherhood and as the object of men's desire.

A few female characters play a more central role in *Jengibre* than in *Cañas y bueyes* and in *Over*. The fate of Juana, daughter of Cipriano and Felicia and victim of the Spaniard José Rodríguez, is one of the axes around whom the plot revolves. Juana does show small spurs of protagonism throughout the narrative, for example in the way that she talks to her boyfriend Taringo as an equal, even pronouncing a political opinion that forms one of the text's main arguments: "Suponte que tó son iguale, ende la polecía a loj'etranjero" (Pérez Cabral 61). She also refuses to tell her father who her attacker was (Pérez Cabral 124), and during the attack itself, she tries to defend herself verbally and physically against her employer, albeit without success (Pérez Cabral 56). However, taking into account the overall situation, Juana occupies the position of a double victim, related to her position as a black woman.

First, the rape she endures from her Spanish employer is reminiscent of the fate of many female domestic slaves, and thereby confirms her belonging to the exploited or slave-like class. (I have already discussed the emphasis on her African descent and its association with a slave past through the use of race-related terminology.) The text makes an almost direct reference to

the past of domestic slave women and the sexual services they had to render to their masters, critically referring to “las casas decentes, donde habrá de comerse la sobra, donde habrá de aguantar las libras de cuantos hombres tenga la familia” (Pérez Cabral 128). And while the text criticizes the local doctor as corrupt—as he contradicts himself in his diagnosis, and is represented as a member of the “aparato nativo”—and thereby counters the doctor’s claim to Juana’s natural promiscuity as one of “estas negras [que] se ponen de vagabundas engañando a los padres” (Pérez Cabral 130), Juana is represented as a helpless victim who cannot escape her inherent position as a black woman of the lower classes. At the same time, the women in her neighborhood reiterate and confirm Juana’s (and by extension their own) inferiority, claiming that “pué yo si no credo que un blanco se fije en semejante cosa...an teniendo plata de sobra p’agarrai lo mejoi” (Pérez Cabral 151). This last quote shows that the text at least points to the internalization of racial hierarchies and a certain projection of self-hatred that relates to such internalization, even if it repeats, as I have argued, these racial hierarchies. The lack of solidarity between the members of the *barrio*, as expressed in the preceding quote, goes along with the general theme of the text: a lack of class consciousness among the working poor, a lack of understanding that adhering to the existing structures will not bring about any positive change.

Second, part of such existing structures is the primacy of a Spanish-style patriarchal order, one that makes the family’s honor dependent on the woman’s honor.⁵⁵ This type of

⁵⁵ As April J. Mayes observes, in the 1920s manhood was re-refined to be oriented around patriarchal authority rather than “martial masculinity,” as a new way of imagining the Dominican nation (11). After an broadening of female activity thanks to the advancement of secular education based on Hostos’s thought, and on a greater inclusion of women into the workforce under the US occupation, a conservative nationalist male backlash called for a return to tradition, and to a female presence in the form of “daughters, wives, or mothers but invisible as independent agents or political actors” (124). This is the way that the women in Cipriano’s family are represented in *Jengibre*.

conscience penetrates even the members of the lowest socio-economic strata, where, for the lack of money, the daughter's virginity is all that one could expect to save in a lifetime (Pérez Cabral 69). Juana carries "el peligro en el sexo" (Pérez Cabral 124), and she is defenselessly exposed to her father's will, as he decides that it is worth risking her life with an abortion. This endeavor results in a disaster, and the dishonored girl becomes the ultimate victim, bleeding to death. The text reveals that while the inhabitants of *Los Asuntos* are not considered to be full members of society by the so-called "gente decente," the neighborhood's population strives to live by the norms set by the elites, inspired by the Spanish model. What they are not conscious of, however, is that these same norms constitute the toolbox that the same elites use to exclude the poor members of society, by labeling them as black (opposite of an invented white Spanish ideal) and by accusing them of not following Catholic rules (all the while denying them access to Catholic ceremonies like weddings and funerals because of a lack of money). While this might be understood as critical of the elite's attitudes and actions, at the same time it does not exonerate the low classes from part of the blame for their own situation. This is, on the one hand, related to the author's idea of a lacking class-consciousness. On the other hand, it can be read beyond a class-related limitation, connected to Balibar's thought.⁵⁶ As long as there is no rupture in the perception that all Dominicans—including those who are marginalized based on racial and socio-economic grounds—belong to a community that is formed and held together by an adherence to the same ideals, the system of racist nationalism will not be disturbed or changed. This is due to the fact that these ideals are actually used to discriminate against the disadvantaged group that nevertheless embraces them.

⁵⁶ Please see *Race, Nation, Class: Ambiguous Identities*, especially the chapter titled "Racism and Nationalism", pp. 37-68.

Cipriano's decision to risk his daughter Juana's life by performing an abortion certainly carries the patriarchal notion of preserving the family honor, but it also speaks about the way that the text positions the character whom embodies the ideal that is propagated by the day's dominant ideology. This opens another fissure in the text's ideological fabric, as it departs from the Hispanophile attitude that works in symbiosis with the negative depiction of black subjects that we have seen so far. José Rodríguez, the Spaniard who rapes the girl, is cunning and economically successful, yet, as Céspedes rightly observes, he is "un personaje en decadencia" (47). Juana's father also places all guilt for the rape on Rodríguez, despite the fact that all others are contradicting the notion of the rape insisting that the merchant is an honorable man of high integrity. The decision to abort a creature that would be the offspring of a white Spaniard actually runs counter a Spanish ideal, suggesting that more Spanish blood imposed through violence does not offer a solution for the Dominican nation. If one were to apply Doris Sommer's concept of foundational fictions, it may be argued that the forced union of an Afro-Dominican woman with a white Spaniard would not constitute a viable future for the Dominican nation. The violent character of such a union actually causes a vicious reaction that interferes with successful reproduction, and without offspring the nation-family cannot survive. The ideal itself then becomes invalid, almost farcical, but the effects of the application of the ideal are brought to the fore. The antiquated notion of honor, so ingrained in the social fabric and the only value attainable by those who are held down by other elements of this code such as race and low socio-economic status, results in an unnecessary (patriarchal) violence against the woman and the unborn child, thereby destroying the hopes for a better future. This negation of a forced "whitening" process as a solution for the Dominican nation runs counter to the dominant anti-Afro ideology of its day. Its presence in *Jengibre* evidences the existence of a plurality of

discourses within the same text, hinting at the complexity inherent in pinning down the process of national identity formation.

Nevertheless, the disapproval of the “white ideal” that I have just discussed does not reach beyond a mere criticism. Put differently, it does not translate into a solution, and is overshadowed by the fact that the perpetrator does not live the consequences of his actions. While the text denies reproduction to the white abuser of the Afro Dominican girl, he also goes unpunished. The brunt of the tragedy is suffered by those in the local Afro community: the girl, first and foremost, her family, and finally her boyfriend, who, rather than fulfilling his dream of consummating his relationship with Juana through marriage is confronted with her sudden death, perishing himself at the end at the hands of the dictator’s militia. The criticism of the Hispanic/white ideal is therefore what I consider a fissure in the fabric of a text that, to a large extent, hangs on to the Afrophobic ideological position propagated by the elites of the time. It may be said that this fissure suggests a certain initiative to question the validity of Hispanophile notions as the basis of Dominican identity, but without actually subverting these notions substantially or presenting an alternative.

Finally, the topic of religion in *Jengibre* merits some critical attention. I did not discuss this topic separately in *Cañas y bueyes* or in *Over*, principally because it had a rather marginal presence in both texts. This is not the case in Pérez Cabral, where Christian images make up a significant part of the narrative. One effect of the recurrent allusions to Christian symbols of crucifixion and rosaries is to point out “la maña católica del criollo sin conciencia” (Pérez Cabral 76). This quote refers to the fact that, as Norberto James points out, the Catholic Church supported Trujillo, turning a blind eye to the injustices and crimes that were committed against the ordinary people, in exchange for privileges and benefits (86). We may draw a parallel to

other such places like Nazi Germany and Mussolini's Italy, where the Catholic Church supported a regime that employed nationalist ideologies driven by racist and inhuman ideas ⁵⁷.

The text uses religion in an ironic sense. It reveals a sense of deception about the way that Catholicism is practiced, and seeks to criticize the false ideal of a religious institution that “preaches water and drinks wine” while preying on the poor rather than helping them. The text presents the Catholic Church as the wrong “role model” for Dominicans, revealing the hypocrisy inherent in the greed that works as the driving motor behind those who hide under a pious cloak, only interested in preserving the status quo. One of the best examples for this is the scene between the priest and Cipriano when the latter goes to the church in order to arrange a Christian burial for his suddenly deceased daughter. “Vá, hombre, vá, en cuarenta dollars: una ganga! Al cielo por un regalo, por una limosna al Santísimo,...bendito sea el fruto de tu vientre, Jesús. Por supuesto, pago adelantado, porque usted sabe ¿no? se ve feo cobrar, por ejemplo, enseguida de una ceremonia tan solemne” (Pérez Cabral 175). When Cipriano reveals that he has no money at all, the priest accuses him of having dressed himself down for the occasion, in order to inspire pity. Juana is finally buried in a wooden box, donated by the town council, much too large for her small figure. The demystification of the Catholic Church as a self-promoting and profit-seeking entity then presents a divergence from the ideology propagated by the elites, and opens up a small space for criticism of one of the institutional pillars of Dominican national identity discourse in the 1930s.

⁵⁷ The willingness of certain members of the church to support local elites for their personal benefit and to thereby turn a blind eye to the ongoing quasi-slave like conditions under which many cane cutters of Haitian descent still live in today's Dominican Republic, are exposed in the documentary “The Price of Sugar” (2007), as well as in Carlos Agramonte's novel *El sacerdote inglés* (2009), both inspired by the real-life experience of Father Christopher Hartley in the canefields around San José de los Llanos, about 65 km east of Santo Domingo.

Yet, the criticism of the Catholic institution as actor and as ideal for Dominican identity only offers a partial explanation of the role of religious symbols in the text. As I have mentioned briefly above, the text repeatedly uses Christian symbols alluding to the cross, to crucifixion, and to sacrifice in order to show the condition of the enslaved and impoverished sugar workers. To begin with, the estate where the plot develops is called “La Esperanza,” a concept clearly connected to the idea of faith and resurrection. What follows is a brief selection of examples that talk about the poor population in general: “Así está la zafra estirando los símbolos como una cinta elástica. Clavando el **inri** sobre las frentes” (76, emphasis mine). The pains, the hunger, the sadness, the mourning that are exacerbated by the rainy season are described as “el gran rosario de ‘Los Asuntos’” (91). The wealthy inhabitants of the city refuse to give bread to the begging poor, which the narrator comments on with the observation that they are acting “como si clavarán cruces” (93). It soon becomes clear, however, that these symbols refer to the local population, those deemed part of the incipient proletariat. The difficult path lying before Juana after she becomes pregnant is referred to as a “viaje de calvario” (110), right before the abortion “la Juana está echada en cruz,” and during the process “saltan madre y madrina a crucificarla en brazo y pies” (161); when Juan Rodríguez fires his secretary Luis Ureña for no valid reason he is “crucificando así al inocente” (114). Such elements help highlight this group’s status of inferiority and impotence; these subjects are chosen to be sacrificed by the system, by those in power, by the wealthy.

Jengibre enthrones or consecrates the subject of the working class by depicting him/her as the ideal victim in a description only comparable to Jesus in the Christian myth. That is, (s)he is worth to be sacrificed. There is an excess of meaning that makes his/her elimination profitable for the Dominican community. Ultimately, the striking sugar workers, a group made up of Afro-

Dominicans and a few *cocolos* (the text mentions that the Haitians are the only ones who keep working), are sacrificed. After the *guardia*'s cunning attack, the site of the slaughter was hallowed: "La cima mojada de sangre debió santificarse, pues desde entonces la llaman loma de los Alzados" (196).

What is most significant about this fact is that the Haitian, on the other hand, is not mentioned in this context. This means that there is a conscious effort on part of the text to include a picture of the black subject in his narration (the poor Dominican laborer, as I have explained in the section on naming and racial marking, as socio-economic status and political affiliation are determinant of whether one is racially identified or not) while excluding another possible version of the Afro subject, that is, the Haitian. Using Giorgio Agamben's terminology, one could explain this exclusion in terms of the "sacredness" of the Haitian. The Haitian, because he is the Other in terms of color, national and political history, religion, social status, and language, is not worthy to be included as a sacrificial referent in the depiction constructed by the text. There is no symbolic profit that stems from the sacrifice of the Haitian. But this very exclusion supports an argument for the Haitian "sacredness" according to Agamben. The Italian theorist explains that "*homo sacer* belongs to God in the form of unsacrificeability and is included in the community in the form of being able to be killed. *Life that cannot be sacrificed and yet may be killed is sacred life*" (82, emphasis in the original). In other words, he says that "the sacred one" can be killed, yet not sacrificed, because he is already a possession of the gods—or in the case of the textual depiction of the Haitian—in the possession of the devil.⁵⁸ The black Dominican can be sacrificed. His sacrifice is confirmed by the Christian imaginary of the crucifixion. In other words, the novel depicts the elimination of the black Dominican following

⁵⁸ In my discussion about the brief appearances the Haitian subject makes within the text, I have already mentioned these characters' association with the "devil."

rites already established. For the Haitian, there are no rites. The exclusion of the Haitian confirms that he is sacred *par excellence* as an excluded member that can be killed at any moment, but not eliminated through a series of cultural and religious practices that are symbolically significant for the community.

In a nutshell, the Dominican, first and foremost the poor and black Dominican's status as an inferior animal worthy of sacrifice, is confirmed by this subject's textual crucifixion. Furthermore, the text's denial of the role of the Haitian as a sacrificial victim is only a(n) (un)conscious affirmation of his Othering, and presents one of the elements where the text directly reflects an embrace of anti-Haitianism as dominant ideology. *Jengibre*, though it allows the Afro-Dominican subject to play a much more central role than in *Cañas y bueyes* and in *Over*, continues to alienate Afro-subjects in general, through the archetypal representation of its characters, the narrator's rather partial manners and his positioning, the plot's generally nostalgic orientation towards the past, and most of all, through racial marking and the use of language as a tool of differentiation. Such marginalization is, at times, called into question through what I have referred to as fissures in the ideological undercurrent, as the text draws parallels between a Haitian and a Dominican character, which is suggestive in regard to a certain internalization of racism by those who are affected by it, and in the way that it interrogates the Spaniard and the Catholic Church as the ideals that will save the Dominican future.

Summing up, it can be said that the intended focus of the social-realist novels in the preceding chapters is on class differences, rather than on racial and cultural differences, but race and class are hardly separable. As I have shown, despite the authors' focus on class issues and criticism of the capitalist exploitation (present in all three, but augmenting/increasing steadily from *Cañas y bueyes*, to *Over*, to *Jengibre*), racial-ideological underpinnings of Trujillo's first

decade in power are definitely present and reveal themselves to the attentive reader. Considering that at least two of these novels are considered to be anti-Trujillista by today's standards, this finding may reveal how deeply internalized the anti-Haitian/anti-Afro sentiments are even in those writers who attempt to take on an antagonistic position towards the elite ideology of their day. It shows the place from which the authors are writing, and reveals their point of view to be mostly resembling that of the elites, as the representation of black subjects—particularly Haitians—remains largely condescending and essentialist. That being said, I would like to emphasize that I am not attempting to argue that these authors blindly subscribe to Hispanophile values of anti-Haitianism. Rather, pointing out how their narratives evidence a certain—perhaps unconscious—internalization of such ideological predispositions, at the same time permits me to discover the cracks and fissures within these ideologies, as evidenced by the texts. These openings are of utmost importance when we consider the works of later authors, as they may present a point of departure for those who—through their works—are intending to advocate meaningful change in the way the Dominican nation perceives itself. The place from which Stanley and Matos Moquete write is, as I show in the ensuing chapters, quite different from that of the writers from the 1920s and 1930s, as they seek to clearly distance themselves of any Trujillo-like sociopolitical positioning.

The ideological openings I have shown in the first three novels also serve an important purpose in complicating the notions of anti-Haitianism and Hispanophilia as the elite and majority ideological trends to shape Dominican national identity. They do so by showing that they are not a “blanket phenomenon” and that they are certainly not the only currents that carry

explanatory power.⁵⁹ The presence of elements of alternative ideological discourses in the earlier novels is significant as the analysis now proceeds to *Tiempo muerto* and *La avalancha: leyenda negra*. These more recent texts develop these alternative currents as their main ideological underpinnings; in other words they seek to present a much more Afro-inclusive vision of what constitutes Dominican identity in the novels' universe. The presence of a plurality of ideological discourses—evidenced in the sugarcane novels through what I call fissures—is also characteristic of Stanley's and Matos Moquete's texts. However, particularly in *La avalancha*, this plurality is not hidden within small ideological openings, but rather expressed explicitly, thereby openly exposing the complexity of the identity negotiation process and its connection to notions of race in Dominican society.

⁵⁹ Newer scholarship, such as for example Samuel Martínez's essay "Not a cockfight: Rethinking Haitian-Dominican Relations," as well as the very recent *The Mulatto Republic* (2014) by April Mayes, supports my approach as it calls for a complication of any simplistic linear explanations about ideology, racial realities and identities, and a merited attention to local complexities.

4.0 CHAPTER FOUR

RESURRECTING ANGLO-AFRO-CARIBBEAN CONTRIBUTIONS TO THE DOMINICAN NATION : THE *COCOLO* EXPERIENCE IN *TIEMPO MUERTO*

In the sugarcane novels, Haitian and *cocolo braceros* worked side by side on the plantations. While differences in the way they are represented in those works certainly exist—some of which I have pointed out in my analysis—they were generally regarded as belonging to the same group, that of black migrant workers, and thus experienced similar, although not equal, treatment and discrimination.

The present situation is different, which is principally due to the fact that the influx of West Indian guest workers has trickled to a minimum over the past half century, while Haitian migrant workers continue to arrive in the republic that borders their country of origin to the east. This means at least two things. First, the majority of those who identify as *cocolos* nowadays are second, third, and fourth generation descendants of the original migrant workers, who have spent their lives in the Dominican Republic, thus participating in Dominican society yet choosing to preserve some of their own cultural traits and traditions. Second, and contrary to the *cocolo* experience, the Haitian and Dominican-Haitian population in the Dominican Republic is much larger and also much more diverse in terms of how much time they have spent in the nation locally referred to as *Quisqueya*. These realities, to a certain extent, are also reflected in the two novels that are the subject of this section. West Indians and Haitians are no longer the subjects of

the same text. As the circumstances surrounding the nature of their presence in the country have become modified, so has their textual representation.⁶⁰ While Matos Moquete's *La Avalancha*, for example, focuses on those Haitian migrants who freshly arrive in Santo Domingo to work in construction, it also alludes to others of Haitian descent who have been around for much longer, as well as to an entire network dedicated to this trade in humans that is not a recent phenomenon. In regards to the West Indian migrants, *Tiempo muerto* actually incorporates the experiences of a number of generations of *cocolos*, starting with the original arrival of the grandfather in the early twentieth century, and including his children and grandchildren born and educated in the country.

The author of the latter novel, Avelino Stanley, belongs to one of those generations I just mentioned. He identifies as a *cocolo*, and according to Alcocer, it was Stanley's mission to write "this account of his ancestors, a mission informed by ideologically-sophisticated tools of ethnic solidarity, narrative craftsmanship, and historical analysis" (66). Until the age of fourteen, the author lived in the *Ingenio Consuelo* (San Pedro de Macorís). His father, just like *Tiempo muerto*'s main character—Raymond Smith or "Papabuelo"—was a *cocolo* who came from Nevis-St. Kitts to the Dominican Republic to work in the sugar industry. Stanley's father—as well as the fictive "Papabuelo"—was the son of a black woman in Nevis and of a North American "blanco de ojos verdes e hijo de puta como muchos yanquis" (David), who never took any interest in his son. His text therefore assumes a certain autobiographical quality, something we have already seen in the first section in Marrero Arísty's *Over*. In the sugarcane novel, the first person protagonist and his trajectory had been inspired by some of the author's own lived

⁶⁰ As I have mentioned earlier, texts about either group are rather exceptional. However, finding recent literary works concerning the *cocolos* is even more difficult than encountering those treating Haitian characters. In that regard, Stanley's novel is extraordinary.

experience as a *bodeguero*. In Stanley's case, the narrative draws on autobiographical elements such as his father's origins and his own childhood experience on the sugar plantation. However, rather than shaping a particular character according to his own or his family's model, Stanley's text focuses more on the different facets of the *cocolo* experience as a whole, and has small details overlapping between his own genealogy and his fiction.

The author's ideological positioning—that also informs his novel's largely critical undercurrent vis-à-vis the discrimination of the *cocolos* and their descendants in racial and socio-economic terms—principally runs counter a nationalist and Afro-phobic discourse. From early in his adolescence, Stanley participated in labor unions, and by the time he went to study at the university “ya tenía definida [su] militancia en el Partido Comunista Dominicano” (David). In terms of his ideological formation and early socialist tendencies, we can draw some parallels with Pérez Cabral, the author of *Jengibre*, who displayed similar socialist tendencies that—as previously discussed—strongly influenced his work. In the case of Stanley, however, these juvenile experiences surely—as he himself claims—accentuated his theoretical training and his moral base (David), yet he also invested a lot of energy and resources in order to achieve recognition, on the one hand, and material wealth, on the other. In order to illustrate this claim, we should consider the following examples: Stanley, starting from young adulthood, participated in every possible literary competition, in order to gain fame as well as monetary rewards. His wife helped him establish a flourishing “máquina de venta” of his books, which finally allowed the couple to construct a luxurious mansion in a first-class tourist neighborhood close to the beach (David). In 2002, the author did not shy away from vehemently and publically criticizing the state's cultural institution (*la Secretaría de Cultura*). He accused it of corruption and prize-money sharing when its committee selected Manuel Núñez's book *El ocaso de la nación*

*dominicana*⁶¹ as the winner of the *Premio Nacional FERIA del Libro Don Eduardo León Jimenes* 2002, thereby upsetting many well-known intellectuals with similar ideological views to his own (Pérez 400-02). A couple of years later, Stanley accepted a position within the same institution he previously criticized—as undersecretary of cultural diversity—and stayed on until his abrupt and publically unexplained departure in 2009. Most recently, he has actively participated in protests against the de-nationalization of Haitian-Dominicans due to the TC 168/13 ruling, and against racial discrimination. I mention these details in order to make clear that Stanley is someone who is prepared to fully participate in society and take advantage of the way in which it is structured, and to work within those structures, while at the same time questioning them through his writing and his actions. This may also explain the presence of gaps or fissures within the ideological fabric of the text. In other words, even in a text like *Tiempo muerto*—clearly aimed at criticizing a mainstream discourse discriminating against Afro-Others—we find some elements that are essentially reminiscent of such very discourses. The ensuing analysis will shed some light on precisely what these fissures consist of and where they can be found within the work.

We also have to keep in mind that *Tiempo muerto* is one of Stanley's earlier texts, one that he wrote before he had reached his current stature, both in terms of socio-economic status as well as regarding the prestige and respect afforded to him as an intellectual. In order to garner the widespread approval and endorsement that it did, the novel had to speak to a much broader audience than just those circles who openly embraced an Afro-inclusive definition of Dominican

⁶¹ This book is the second edition of a volume with the same title that was published in 1990. It is one of the cornerstones of contemporary conservative Dominican thinking, and marks a continuity of the ideas propagated by Trujillo and Balaguer, which regard the Haitian as evil and a threat to Dominican identity and culture, negating him any place whatsoever within the nation.

identity. This means that despite of an ideological undercurrent that represents the Afro-descendant *cocolo* experience as one that becomes intrinsically Dominican over the passing of a few generations, it could not be absolutely radical and alienating—in ideological terms—to those elements of society that subscribe to a discourse of inferiority and difference of the Afro-descendant foreigner vis-à-vis his or her Dominican counterpart. What I am arguing is not that the author's intentions were questionable—only he can know for sure—but rather that we also have to pay attention to the circumstances surrounding the text's production. Stanley, then an up-and-coming author with a fairly progressive ideological position, wrote this novel with the intention to vindicate his black migrant ancestors' forgotten history and contribution to Dominican society, and to criticize the discrimination they experienced because of a perceived racial difference. We should not forget, however, that this writer was also rather ambitious in his striving for national recognition. Most importantly, he published this novel during a time when the Dominican nation had outwardly moved beyond Trujillo and Balaguer's Hispanophile and anti-Haitian discourse—even allowing intellectual debate on the topic—yet at the same time saw a book like *El ocaso de la nación dominicana* awarded at one of its most important international intellectual events (the annual Feria del Libro, already mentioned above). In sum, despite the fact that the work, at first glance, seems to have a clear ideological purpose and direction, the socio-cultural and the author's personal circumstances surrounding its composition suggest that there is a potential for the ideological position revealed in the text itself to be much less clear-cut. In other words, its location may be much closer to a gray area or gray zone in-between, rather than be situated right around one of the two ideological poles.⁶² In the close textual analysis that

⁶² In a wider context, it may be worthwhile to consider Primo Levi's exploration of the concept of the gray zone in his essay titled *The Drowned and the Saved* (1988). While Levi, based on his

follows I highlight how the representation of the Afro subject, in this case particularly focused on the *cocolo*, adheres to as well as—in what I call fissures—diverges from an Afro-inclusive vision of Dominican identity, much in opposition to the discourse propagated by Trujillo, Balaguer, and others.

4.1 IMAGERY, NARRATIVE STRUCTURE, AND “DIASPORAN CREOLE”

Tiempo muerto's central setting is the sugar estate—or *ingenio*—Consuelo, with some small exceptions when a couple of characters go to the capital to run errands or buy things unavailable locally. In that sense, the work connects with the sugarcane novels; the sugar estate is a constant presence in the development of the plot. This space is directly connected to the *cocolo* experience at the heart of the story, as it was the original reason that West Indian *braceros* came to the Dominican Republic. Also at the center of the narrative is one of these migrant workers, the character—Raymond Smith—who connects all other characters to this space and to the *cocolo*-Dominican experience. His presence/absence is what drives the plot forward. Besides him, a couple of generations of his immediate family remain tied to this land and space. They continue to live in the humble estate-owned house that saw to the creation of the family, and the whistling of the *ingenio*'s clock structures their day: “si apenas acaban de pitar el doce del día en la ingenio” (Stanley *Tiempo* 114). While we can clearly see that the role of the estate will most

experience as an Auschwitz survivor, refers to the environment of the concentration camp, his assertion could also be applied to the complexities of ideological affinities and national identity in the Dominican context. The scholar suggests that the exploration of the ‘grey zone’ requires a rejection of the “Manichean tendency which shuns half-tints and complexities, and resorts to the black-and-white binary opposition(s) of ‘friend’ and ‘enemy’, ‘good’ and ‘evil’” (22).

likely diminish in the future—as the newer generations leave this space in order to work and live elsewhere (often in the urban areas)—for the purposes of this text and the *cocolo* story of the past and present, it still serves as the linchpin of all that happens. It is the place where the West Indian migrant worker becomes the *cocolo*, where he clings to his identity in the form of language, character, food, and longing for “home,” yet also where he grows roots and this identity slowly changes, where the intermingling of West Indian and Dominican culture takes place. It is the place where the black migrant experiences discrimination, exploitation, and hardship, yet also the place where he grows firmly confident of himself, where he raises a family, where he finds his voice to pass on his personal story—exemplary of the story of the *cocolos* and their experiences in the Dominican Republic—to the younger generation, so that they may embrace this as part of their own history.

In the sugarcane novels, references to the past were generally filled with nostalgia, with the invoking of a “lost paradise,” of a stable and coherent world before the “invasion” of the sugar industry changed and corrupted society and its makeup for the worse, in part due to the influx of migrant populations. We may recall the bucolic images of the mountains and subsistence agriculture in *Cañas y bueyes*, the description of Daniel’s comfortable life before angering his father in *Over*, and Cipriano’s recounting of his family’s small but sufficient property in *Jengibre*, to later be stolen by the likes of the dictator. Baud’s claim that “nostalgic appeals often referred to a mythical past where nationality was supposed to have been unambiguous and unproblematic” (124) certainly applies to these texts—produced during a time of ethnic tensions exploited by the capitalist forces driving social changes, and exacerbated by a political ideology predicated even further division.

In *Tiempo muerto*, on the other hand, nostalgia, while certainly present, does not fulfill the same kind of role. The character Raymond Smith, also called *Papabuelo*, surely does miss his homeland. This longing drives him to undertake a journey back to St. Kitts many decades after he left that island in order to work on the sugar plantations in the Dominican Republic. However, nowhere in the retelling of his story does he refer to his homeland or his experiences there as a young man in the idealistic or nostalgic ways that we find in the sugarcane novels. The narration is void of references to a better and easier past. Rather, the impressions that *Papabuelo* conveys about his life in St. Kitts and his motivation to migrate to the Dominican Republic are that he was living a harsh reality, in terms of his personal situation (his family relationships) and his socio-economic standing. It may be said that his desire to return is fueled by the sense that he needs to complete his life's journey by returning to his birthplace, by a longing for his roots, maybe even by the wish to momentarily escape the status of being a perpetual foreigner (even within his family, as all other members that surround him were born and grew up in the Dominican Republic). However, his personal voyage to the past does not translate into the overall negative and pessimist outlook about the future that we saw in the sugarcane novels, where only the past held promise and tomorrow was set up to be a certain letdown. The brief incursions into the past made by other characters, such as Mariíta or Miss Raymond, sometimes carry a nostalgic tone, but they do so suggesting that discovering and remembering the past may provide some personal peace and guidance for the present. As *Tiempo muerto* is a text that looks towards change and the future with hope instead of dreading it as an eminent failure, the limited instances of nostalgia it evidences are personal rather than systemic, and do not dominate the overall atmosphere of the text.

Both the sugarcane novels and *Tiempo muerto* coincide in their depiction of the life on the plantation—especially for the *braceros*—as infernal, particularly during the 1920s and 30s. Stanley’s text’s description of the arrival of the West Indian workers by boat evokes the Middle Passage, something we have already seen in *Over*, only this time it is not romanticized or idealized as in the latter. “El hambre y el cansancio de venir amontonados como sardinas [...] prácticamente parecíamos momias negras” (Stanley *Tiempo* 13). The description of the *ingenio* also evokes the same hellish and overwhelming imagery presented in the sugarcane novels, with the over-towering chimneys as the centerpiece: “tres enormes churros de humo negro [...] parecía un río de agua turbia que había salido del corazón de la tierra y subía hasta ensuciar esas nubes tan impecablemente blancas” (Stanley *Tiempo* 11). We also recognize the rail wagons that transport the migrant workers as if they were objects: “nos montaron en el primero y el segundo [...] vagones que se usaban para cargar caña, no gente” while they were traveling the “ruta de armadura,” antithesis to the sweet sugar they would be harvesting (Stanley *Tiempo* 15). In the sugarcane novels, these images work as a sort of premonition, and symbolize the beginning of a journey into certain abyss. In contrast, in *Tiempo muerto*, they also symbolize the beginning of a lifelong struggle, but not without hope, and not necessarily leading to a dreadful ending. The *cocolo*’s journey in Stanley’s text begins in this hell, but his resilience and ability to maneuver his adopted environment prevent him from becoming a “failed existence” like Daniel in *Over*.

Another similarity with Marrero Aristy’s novel is the autobiographical quality of *Papabuelo*’s narration, which provides the reader with a rather linear view from the inside of the life of a particular *cocolo* sugarworker. For the reader familiar with the sugarcane novels of the 1930s, *Papabuelo*’s story about his own life feels like a more recent, maybe a bit more sober, version of a text belonging to that same genre. *Tiempo muerto* recycles and adapts this type of

social-realist narrative as part of its structure. However, it does not limit itself to the grandfather's expression. Rather, there are five sets of storytellers whose different perspectives, spaces, and timeframes at a variety of moments intersect with each other during the progression of *Papabuelo*'s story. The group overall represents three generations of people tied to the original *cocolo* character through family relations. The sequence in which they speak repeats itself eleven times, and includes distinct narrative techniques. First the grandfather and then his granddaughter Mariita recount their anecdotes in the first person, usually in the past tense. A dialogue that involves Papabuelo's female descendants follows, and while Mariita and her mother generally dominate the conversation, the other daughters and granddaughters move in and out of the discussion that is happening in the present. The next section contains letters from Raymond Smith's oldest daughter who was born in St. Kitts and raised by someone in the United Kingdom. Written in the present, these letters trace her attempts to find her father whom she knows nothing about. Finally, the last section in the sequence is one of the most interesting ones that I will discuss more in detail further along in this analysis. The narrator is a feminist Afro-Dominican woman, who enters into a romantic relationship with *Papabuelo*'s only estranged son. She expresses herself in a mixture of first-person narrative and letters. The sequence only changes once *Papabuelo* dies, after which all of the other narrators get to speak once more, but this time in a different order.

The presence of multiple narrative voices is not new or unique to literature in general, or to Latin American or Caribbean literature in particular. We can find a great number of examples among the works of the writers of the Latin American Boom. We may think, for instance, of Carlos Fuentes's *La muerte de Artemio Cruz* (1962), Mario Vargas Llosa's *La ciudad y los perros* (1963), or Guillermo Cabrera Infantes' *Tres tristes tigres* (1965). This technique formed

part of a wave of stylistic and technical experimentation that—amongst other things—sought to find a way to totalize the history of Latin America. While these writers did not quite arrive at that goal, they found that literature could help shape history and identity, and envisioned that literature was to help define what would make up the essence of how Latin America would see itself and be seen by others. With the arrival of the 1970s, this ambitious project was very much subdued, as literature became more intimate, more focused on the individual experience. In other words, it lost some of that hope; it became more sober, less aspiring. Viewed in this larger context of Latin American literature, why does Stanley choose to employ this technique in *Tiempo muerto*, written late in the last decade of the twentieth century? I argue that he is seeking to use the appropriate textual form to supplement the rethinking of Dominican history and identity.⁶³ In a sense, he is assuming the intention of writing a totalizing narrative in order to incorporate something left out before: *cocolo* history, *cocolo* contributions to the Dominican nation, *cocolo* belonging to this nation. For the longest time, this ethnic group was completely invisible, as the character Irma attests in her letter to Rigoberta Menchú: “llegó un momento en que los(as) cocos(as) eran tan discriminados(as) que hasta en las polémicas racistas los(as) ignoraban. Sencillamente no los(las) mencionaban” (Stanley *Tiempo* 187). In essence, the author is attempting to write an Afro subject into the history of a society that has—based on a negation of its own African heritage—traditionally excluded him or her.

In addition to drawing from elements inspired by the writers of the Latin American Boom, the fragmentation of voices and perspectives and of narrative techniques in *Tiempo*

⁶³ I would like to note that Stanley’s novel is by no means the only Dominican text of its time that employs multiple narrators and its strive to re-write and re-assemble a part of Dominican history. It was written a decade before Junot Díaz’s well-known *The Brief Wondrous Life of Oscar Wao* (2007), which uses similar techniques in order to (re-)construct the story of the Dominican Republic and, more particularly, of its diaspora to the United States.

muerto follow the characterization that Derek Walcott gives to Caribbean art in “The Antilles: Fragments of Epic Memory” (1992). In this Nobel Prize lecture, Walcott suggests that Caribbean art “‘reassembles the fragments’ and ‘restores [the] shattered histories’ of the islands” (Hanna 498). This alludes to the multifaceted diasporic quality of the Caribbean experience in general—as a region of the encounter and intermingling of an incredible array of peoples and cultures and as a space of constant movement and in- and out-migration—and to the silences and gaps in the official memory of this experience, particularly related to those groups that are not considered to be of European descent. Thus, in Stanley’s novel, the choice of narrators and their style may be viewed as the result of an intersection of Caribbean and Latin American literary tradition aiming at resurrecting a forgotten part of the past, in order to re-define an identity of the present.

While *Tiempo muerto* certainly is a structured montage of distinct perspectives, it is interesting to note the complete absence of a unifying narrating voice or any kind of omniscience. The text thereby escapes any attempt at objectivity. It helps surpass the limits posed by a linear or same-person narrative, and gives the novel a texture that resembles the plurality and fluidity of elements that make up the experience of a diasporic community that has become a largely unacknowledged part of Dominican culture and identity. The novel touches upon experiences from different spaces including St.Kitts, England, and the United States, that all converge at some point with *Papabuelo*’s story in the Dominican Republic—the center stage, the meeting place. Through the representation of different Dominican, *cocolo*-Dominican, and *cocolo* voices and perspectives the text escapes the constraints of any single truth, or any single (Hi)story, as it does not privilege any particular one. It avoids that overpowering singular voice

that drowns out all of the others, one that has traditionally dominated the telling of History.⁶⁴ The novel seeks to vindicate the contribution of the *cocolo* ethnic group—who are also representatives of the racial Other—to the Dominican nation, something that has traditionally been silenced or repressed by official History. The choice of subjective narration techniques—such as the first person narrator, dialogues, and letters—then contributes to this goal by allowing the reader to doubt the authenticity of any particular discourse, including that which may make up dominant ideological thought.

The textual representation of spoken language, particularly the choice of idiom enunciated by migrant members of the community in dialogues, is an element whose presence I have already discussed in relation to the sugarcane novels of the first section of this analysis. However, in *Tiempo muerto*, only in one instance is the *cocolo* dialect referred to as a negative signifier of difference. This moment close to the beginning of the novel, which serves to represent a rather mainstream perspective of Dominicans' attitude towards Otherness, criticizes how the name Jacob is pronounced in an English way, when “por lo menos podría ser Jacob, como en la biblia, y no pronunciado así, en esa otra lengua. O como en realidad debió ser: Jacobo” (Stanley *Tiempo* 24). The interesting thing about this criticism is that it is made in reference, speaking about the dialect, rather than through a direct example.

When what could be termed “*cocolo* speech” is used in dialogue, its function—as in the sugarcane novels—is to make the representation of *cocolo* culture more authentic. However, contrary to the texts from the 1930s, in *Tiempo muerto* the difference created through dialogue

⁶⁴ The capitalization of the term History relates to the concept that official History is recounted by the winners and shaped by their perspective, in opposition to history as experienced by those considered losers, often untold and forgotten. Stanley's novel is an attempt at resurrecting this part of this history.

does not necessarily carry a negative connotation. First, the mistakes replicated are rather minor, and limited to questions of confusions of grammatical gender and verb conjugations (rather than in the sugarcane novels, where extreme colloquialisms and even native language interference could be observed). As we see from the examples that follow, the linguistic alterations in *Tiempo muerto* do not hamper the flow of the narration or the understanding on part of the reader. Second, while they mark the speaker as a first generation (*Papabuelo*) or as a second generation migrant (*Papabuelo's* daughter Mery), the surrounding narrative does not conduce to a representation of the subject as inferior, as was the case in the sugarcane novels. The relationship between the overall mode of the narrative and the dialogue's contribution to that mode is significant, as we can see in the following example. The occasions when *Papabuelo* speaks in this are exclusively transcribed through his granddaughter Mariita. So when her grandfather relates his sadness and longing to return to St. Kitts, his way of speaking, the mistakes he makes as a non-native Spanish speaker, actually emphasize and enhance the loneliness, the distance that he feels towards his surroundings. "De ti nada. [...] Ni del abuela tuya. Pero me siento solo. Me siento como si no hubiera tengo hijos ni nietos ni nada" (Stanley *Tiempo* 37). While the errors help make him appear more isolated, even fragile and sad, they do not infantilize him or make him appear inferior, as was the case in the sugarcane novels. Additionally, the difference in pronunciation and syntax does not serve to propagate a stereotypical image of Otherness. In a later section, for example, the same *Papabuelo* that seemed sad and vulnerable in the quote above, reprimands his son in a very authoritative manner that is in no way compromised by his mistakes: "Jacob, siéntate ahí, pone tu nalga en la banco y no te pares hasta que no te bebas todo la chocolate. [...] Bébaselo ahora mismo, bébaselo *truqui truqui* sin dejar ni un gota en la jarro" (93). This type of enunciation is part of the character's multifaceted personality, and does not

serve the purpose to ascribe him an inferior place in society. The same occurs with Mery, whose mistakes are less in number than those of her father, limited to the confusion of grammatical gender: “Pues llama a los muchachas” (Stanley *Tiempo* 38), “coge la teléfono, Gloria,” (Stanley *Tiempo* 61), “la único hijo varón [...] y la papá lo trataba con cariño porque era la más pequeño y la único varon” (Stanley *Tiempo* 182). Rather, *Papabuelo* and Mery speak what Kezia Page terms a “diasporan creole,” or a linguistic negotiation that goes along with multiple narrative voices, with a text that speaks in multiple voices, which further reveal and reflect the nature of diasporic community (231) ⁶⁵. In this sense, the presence of “*cocolo* speech” in the text is an intricate part of the overall multi-vocal narrative structure that seeks to inscribe the neglected diasporic *cocolo* experience into Dominican history.

4.2 DISPARATE VISIONS OF BLACKNESS

The text’s plurality of voices makes it difficult to pin down what could be described as the general mood of the work—it varies greatly according to the narrator and situation, shifting between anxiety, enjoyment, excitement, anger, even indifference—it may be said that in *Papabuelo*’s part of the narration, there is an overwhelming sense of lament and of acquiescence. He is not regretting his life in general, but rather referring to his racial identity and to the ensuing realities that he is forced to face as a black migrant in the Dominican Republic. In other words, *Papabuelo* draws a direct connection between his struggles and hardships —announced by the

⁶⁵ Kezia Page, in “From Diasporic Sensibility to Close Transnationalism,” uses this term to refer to diasporic communities between the Caribbean and the United States, but I argue that the concept is also applicable for intra-Caribbean diaspora, such as the *cocolos* in the Dominican Republic.

images mentioned above—and his race. When he recounts his story, we immediately note a continuous repetition of the term “*negro*,” referring either to himself or to Afro-descendants as a group. “La historia de un negro no le interesa a nadie” (Stanley *Tiempo* 9) is the opening line of the novel, followed by a number of references to the low standing that Dominican society attributes to Afro subjects: “nos han devuelto mucho rechazo, desprecio por ser negros” (Stanley *Tiempo* 9) and “A bordo no venía ninguna gente de importancia” (Stanley *Tiempo* 10). In a way, he is denouncing the misery blacks were forced to experience because of society’s racial bias, something that was so common that it had become a way of life: “el hambre no nos mató porque éramos negros. Y el negro pasa tanta hambre durante su vida que puede morir sin comer, pero no muere de hambre” (Stanley *Tiempo* 13). His tone suggests resignation rather than the fervor and rebellious spirit attributed to the *cocolos* as strike leaders, that we have seen in the way that they are represented, for instance, in *Jengibre*, which follows a Marxist tradition.

In opposition to those characters, *Papabuelo* embodies obedience, impotence, and certain conformity to the fate he sees for himself as a black migrant worker in the Dominican Republic. As Gilroy points out, for “blacks in the West, social self-creation through labour is not the core of emancipatory hopes. For the descendants of slaves, work signifies only servitude, misery, and subordination” (496). *Tiempo muerto*’s main character, then, embodies this attitude. On the one hand, he bemoans this reality, by pointing it out in a somber and lamentable tone: “A un negro que llega en busca de mejorar su destino únicamente lo espera el trabajo” (Stanley *Tiempo* 10); he also says that “además, no importaba que uno fuera progresando con seriedad y dedicación en el trabajo, como quiera nos despreciaban por ser negros” (Stanley *Tiempo* 160). These are realizations that are the result of his life experience. As becomes evident throughout the narration, when he was younger *Papabuelo* surrendered to the reality he encountered, and

predicated an image of obedience and submission as the only avenues to success, for example by claiming that “trato es trato, trabajo es trabajo y con el deber hay que ser obediente” (52), or by emphasizing that “los ingleses siempre vivían discutiendo, yo no. Tal vez por eso [el capataz] me trataba menos despectivamente” (88). He displayed an infatigable work-ethic, didn’t stand up to his superiors, and dedicated himself to doing his job the best he could. His granddaughter Mariíta—not *Papabuelo* himself—recounts the moment in which his trust in the system that exploited him was finally destroyed. After twenty-nine years with the company, he won the prize of sugar confectioner of the year, only to be demoted to a much lower position during the following harvest season. The only thing left for him was an interior rage (180), which finally turned into the resignation that we witness in the way he tells his story, already a retired and old man. In sum, it can be said that *Papabuelo* accentuates his black identity, but not in an empowering sense. He is acutely aware of his place in the social hierarchy, of his status as a black migrant in a Dominican society that rejected him because of his race. He says about his wife: “Nunca comprendí como ella, siendo dominicana, se atrevió a casarse con un negro cocolo. Porque éramos tan despreciados en aquel tiempo” (145).

However, rather than affirming his own identity, he accepts his race and the ensuing discrimination as his cross, as his burden; and acts accordingly choosing a way of conformity and obedience as his personal avenue to success. In a way, the text’s way of representing this *cocolo* character denies him the kind of firm agency that would vindicate the injustices suffered by his kind (he does take agency when he secretly travels back to St. Kitts to die, but that has little relation to his identity as an Afro-descendant). He is successful in the sense that he survives and is able to raise a family, yet his only way of doing so was to work within the system, to accept his plight. In other words, *Papabuelo*’s experience of self is anchored in a negative

blackness, in not being a subject with a real voice, in having no value (as he continuously reiterates). Rather than engaging in a discourse that would represent him as a vigorous and proud subject, the text resorts to a discourse that echoes an ideology that delegates him to the bottom ranks due to his race. This is then the first fissure in a text that, ideologically speaking, seeks to advocate for a more Afro-inclusive Dominican identity. It could be argued that through *Papabuelo*'s character, the text is attempting to represent realities related to the anti-Haitian/anti-Afro ideology that was in official policy during the Trujillo and Balaguer years. However, the fact that this migrant Afro subject remains in the place—in socio-economic as well as psychological terms—assigned to him according to such an ideology complicates the notion of an absolute advocacy for that subject by the text.

Only one additional character in the entire novel identifies herself as black, and does so in a way quite opposite to *Papabuelo*. If the latter chooses an avenue of obedience and conformity to the system, Irma opts to actively subvert the beauty ideals and patriarchal traditions associated with Hispanophile attitudes and to affirmatively embrace her Afro identity. She states this directly when she talks about her decision to “dejarme el pelo rizado como una forma de identidad con mis ancestros.” Her physical appearance is a statement against Dominican social norms: she does not shave her armpits or legs, nor uses artificial make-up (Stanley *Tiempo* 84). Irma also identifies herself as a vehement feminist, belonging to an organization called the *Dirección Nacional del Colectivo Mujer & Feminismo*. This attitude is reflected, for instance, in the way that she chooses to address and talk about groups of people. Irma refuses to use the customary Spanish masculine plural form that is generally used to address all members of a group as long as one of them is male, and instead makes sure to include the male and female forms alike, something she calls the “recurso no sexista” (Stanley *Tiempo* 120): “ellos(as)”

(Stanley *Tiempo* 25) ; “los(as) cocos(as) (Stanley *Tiempo* 65); “los(as) negros(as), los(as) seres racistas, los(as) muertos(as), todos(as) seres humanos(as) (Stanley *Tiempo* 103); niños(as), nuestros(as) otros(as) antillanos(as), nuestros(as) antepasados(as) (Stanley *Tiempo* 120); Apreciasos(as) señores(as) (Stanley *Tiempo* 172). In sum, Irma is an Afro-Dominican woman who acts as a sort of spokesperson for the *cocolos*, representing them as strong, invincible, proud, and desirable subjects. She uses a sharp-witted and ironic discourse laced with exaggerations in order to advocate for this group’s qualities, and to criticize the prejudice and injustices that blacks in general have traditionally been subjected to. This type of discourse is particularly evident in her letters to such historical figures as Abraham Lincoln, José Martí, or Adolf Hitler. For instance, while addressing the German dictator—whom she belittles as “Adolfito” in a gesture of false affection—Irma sums up the journey and the resilience of those that arrived via boat from the Anglo-Caribbean islands, just like *Papabuelo* had done.

Venían por pedidos, en goletas, desde las islas de barlovento y sotavento. Son inmunes a todas las bacterias. Sobrevivieron al paludismo, a la peste bubónica, a la fiebre amarilla, al hambre, a la discriminación y al moderno cólera. Son una *vaina*. [...] Se trata, Adolfito, de una etnia pura, porque en ella hay aportes de todo tipo, de todas las vainas que te puedes imaginar. (Stanley *Tiempo* 139)

However, Irma’s discourse has a positive undertone, she is advertising this group of subjects as capable of “bettering the race,” while *Papabuelo* used this experience to underscore the suffering of these Afro subjects due to society’s contempt for their race.

Because of her identity, Irma occupies a particular place in society from which she speaks: as a Dominican, she is part of the community that, to a large extent, embraces an

ideology that bases Dominican identity on a rejection of the Afro Other, embodied by black migrants such as the Haitian and the *cocolo*. Yet, she identifies herself with an African past and advocates for Afro-descendants—including herself—in general, and for an inclusion of the *cocolo* in the Dominican nation through an acknowledgement of his contribution to the national culture. Irma may then be seen as an element that can potentially contribute to what Balibar refers to as the “internal decomposition of the community created by racism,” which is necessary for the destruction of the racist complex (18). In a way, a character like Irma can undermine the notion that a “national” community exists that bases itself on the opposition to the Other, to the migrant Afro-subject; since she serves as a counter-example to this type of ideology. She points to a shared space between “us” and “them,” an intermingling that highlights human qualities instead of pointing out differences, thereby corroding the boundaries between the two, making them much less distinguishable.⁶⁶

The way in which Irma speaks about the *cocolos*, and particularly about Papabuelo’s son Jacob (her lover), deserves special attention, because it may be read as a fissure in the underlying Afro-affirmative discourse of the text, yet at the same time as a way the text further deconstructs Hispanophile and patriarchal notions associated with a national discourse that excludes migrant Afro subjects. At the outset, Irma perceives the *cocolos* just like society does: as the Other. On her way to *La Romana*, where she will watch a group of dancers practice *gulya*,⁶⁷ Irma complains to a friend about the *cocolo*’s negative influence on Dominican culture (I already

⁶⁶ I would like to point out that other strong women characters in *Tiempo muerto*, such as Papabuelo’s granddaughter Mariita for example, also represent this cultural intersection between Dominicans and *cocolos*. None of those characters, however, even make mention of their racial identity, or of its connection with their ethnic identity, which is why I do not discuss them further at this particular point.

⁶⁷ *Gulya* is a traditional *cocolo* dance performance that originates in the 19th century. It was declared UNESCO Cultural Heritage in 2005.

referenced this scene above in relation to the only negative representation of *cocolo* dialect in the novel). By doing this, she presents to the reader what many of her compatriots may think or feel when they encounter a “foreign-feeling” element in their midst, such as a name that is pronounced in a different way (in this case “Jacob,” pronounced with an English accent). At the same time, Irma successfully exposes the contradictory nature of this Othering discourse, as it becomes clear that at the beginning, she (as a sort of spokeswoman for the Dominican people) criticizes the *cocolo*’s influence as cultural *penetration*. “Porque me preguntaba que cómo, en pleno desarrollo de los trabajos que realizan para enfrentar la penetración cultural, podía aparecer un nativo cuyo nombre se pronunciara así” (Stanley *Tiempo* 24). Shortly after, however, she refers to it as cultural *alienation*. “Inclusive, y eso es lo peor, es la lengua de ellos (as). Los(as) que están sometiendo los valores de nuestra sociedad a esa alienación cultural atroz que nos embate por todos lados” (Stanley *Tiempo* 25). The simultaneous use of these two concepts—somewhat counterintuitively—seems to suggest that Dominican culture is a valuable entity of rigid norms and values that needs to be protected from any kind of alteration, and that is expected to be embraced equally by all members of society. The *cocolo* presence and the preservation of an element of their (Other) cultural heritage is clearly framed as a direct assault on Dominican society and its prescribed ideals, an unwelcome “invasion,” or, to use the text’s terminology, a “penetration.” Irma’s choice of words seems underscore that the *cocolo* is the enemy of the Dominican nation, an enemy that attacks (“embate”) through unbearable (“atroz”) cultural alienation, an act that deserves confrontation (“enfrentar”).

Nevertheless, her discourse is ambivalent, as it can be read in two ways: first, it can be taken literally, at face value. In that sense, it would mark her as a representative of a way of thinking about Dominicanity aligned with the conservative forces that subscribe to an ideology

that marks migrant Afro subjects as a danger to the Dominican nation and national identity. Second, it can be read as an ironic take on such an ideology. As I have pointed out above, the character, by apparently repeating such learned discourse also exposes its contradictions, and thereby robs it of some of its plausibility. A few lines later she refers to looking at the *cocolo* in the terms outlined above as a false appreciation (Stanley *Tiempo* 25), therefore discrediting the discourse even more. Irma's tone confirms the ambiguity between what she says and what she means; later in the text it becomes increasingly sharp-witted and ironic. Yet at this beginning point it could be read as somewhere in between simple and sincere reporting and a parodist and questioning representation of mainstream beliefs, and thereby suggest a slight opening in the ideological fabric of the text.

A much larger fissure in the otherwise largely Afro-affirmative undercurrent of the narrative can be found in the way that one particular *cocolo* subject is represented as an object. Towards the end of her first intervention in *Tiempo muerto*, Irma refers to Jacob—who is soon to become her lover—in a way that reminds us of how the *cocolos* were described in the sugarcane novels, such as *Cañas y bueyes*: “ese negrito gracioso con los cabellos de pasa, con la dentadura como la masa de un coco seco y con todo el ritmo que exhibía en el ensayo de ese baile” (Stanley *Tiempo* 25). She draws attention to his color using a term of endearment. The pairing of this term with the adjective “funny” makes this subject appear harmless. Very white teeth—referenced again on multiple occasions afterwards (Stanley *Tiempo* 45, 83)—and a “natural” rhythm and propensity to dance complete the picture of the *cocolo*. This presents the beginning of a long series of instances where Irma invokes commonly propagated stereotypes associated with Afro-descendants when she talks about *Papabuelo*'s only male offspring.

Jacob soon becomes the focal point of Irma's sexual gaze; he becomes the object of her desire. Irma alludes to his spiritual powers "me tiene exorcizada" (Stanley *Tiempo* 45); to his smell: "de la piel le brotaba un provocativo olor a hombre [...] no se podía desperdiciar ese olor de macho cabrío" (Stanley *Tiempo* 45-6), and more than anything to his hyper-sexual force: "le resaltó su inmenso animal en posición de pelea" (Stanley *Tiempo* 154). These are all characteristics that have been used since colonial times to mark the difference between the colonizers—who self-identified as Europeans—and the Afro-descendant colonized/enslaved, who were identified as Others, as exotic, as sexually promiscuous.

But Jacob's objectification is not limited to his role as a lover. Rather, he literally becomes Irma's object of study. She decides to investigate the *cocolos* for her university thesis, and to make Jacob her prime sample, stating that "esa etnia es sumamente rica para su estudio, tanto en lo social como en lo cultural" (Stanley *Tiempo* 65), referring to her lover as "un *cocolo* que como muestra ha sido sumamente representativo" (Stanley *Tiempo* 203). Thus, Irma seems to be mimicking an extensive tradition of Western anthropology. It is important to remember that studying cultural and racial Others has long been a vital part of the Western (neo)colonial project, as it ensures the maintaining of difference and the perpetuation of the dominant Western view of what Others are like and how they act. It is also significant that in this type of discourse, the Other does not speak, but rather is spoken about. As Nodelman rightly points out in her discussion about the similarities between children's literature and Said's orientalism: "the other is always conceived by those who study it to be unable to study itself, to see or speak for itself" (29). This certainly fits the representation of Jacob in *Tiempo muerto*. He does not pronounce a single word in the entire narrative, and his relationship to his family in particular and to his cultural heritage in general is entirely recounted and analyzed to the reader through other

characters, first and foremost through Irma. In other words, Jacob does not speak; rather, he is always spoken about.

When read in the way I just outlined, Jacob's depiction exactly replicates a long tradition of representing Afro subjects, one that dates back to the days of slavery: he is objectified (both sexually and scientifically), he does not have a voice, he is happy and infantile, he has great rhythm, and, most importantly, as an Afro-descendant male he is attributed with possessing naturally exaggerated sexual prowess and desire (a process also referred to as hypersexualization). This type of representation presents a fissure in the ideological direction that the text is generally prescribed, as it does not fit with a current that seeks to propagate an inclusion of the Afro subject into the national imaginary. Rather, it continues to reiterate old stereotypes aimed at maintaining a sense of (racial) hierarchy and difference, of European superiority.

However, the inherent ambivalence between sincerity and parody that marks Irma's discourse—already discussed above—also applies to the way in which she represents her *cocolo* lover. In this case, the key to this ambivalence lies not only in the ironic tone that may render the reader suspect of taking Irma's affirmations at face value. In addition, the fact that it is a self-identified Afro-Dominican woman who pronounces the objectifying discourse is utterly significant. The female Afro subject, who in the past often became the object of the exoticizing gaze and the physical imposition of the white male, now reclaims the space traditionally dominated by the latter. From this very position, she validates the Afro male by means of the same stereotypes that were invented to reduce him to an inferior position vis-à-vis the European colonizer and his post-colonial successors. Read in this sense, Jacob's representation not only affirms the Afro subject's place within the nation, but also reverses traditional patriarchal roles

that form part of the Hispanic establishment which conservative forces praise as the ideal for Dominican identity.

Thus, in the case of Jacob's representation, can we speak of a true ideological fissure in the text's fabric, like those discussed previously in the analysis of the sugarcane novels? It is becoming increasingly more difficult to pinpoint an explicitly pro- or anti-Afro ideological undercurrent. Rather, the complexities of Dominican national identity formation are beginning to surface more frequently. In the case of the manner in which Jacob is represented—as is also the case with a number of the Haitian characters in *La avalancha*, as we will see in the following chapter—neither reading completely excludes the other. Neither approach—whether it be interpreting the text as literal or as ironic—convinces to the point that it would render the other invalid. Therefore, Irma's version of Jacob remains ambiguous: it can be a fissure, yet it does not have to be.

In sum, *Papabuelo* recounts the *cocolo* experience from a personal viewpoint, from his own experience, and ties the negative elements of this experience to his blackness. This is due to the discriminatory treatment that he receives because of his phenotype, living in a society that identified itself with Hispanicity, in other words with whiteness. His tendency to conform and obey to the norms of the receiving society, in the sense that he laments his status as an Afro subject but resigns himself to it, diminishes his role as an advocate for his racial and ethnic group. His downtrodden and resigned narration invokes a sort of pity in the reader, but also leaves the latter longing for a stronger stance against those abusing *Papabuelo* and his peers. His whole experience is anchored in being black, but not in being a self-affirming black subject with a voice. His own expression, even as it recounts his own and his people's (hi)story, does not take up an empowered discourse, but rather resigns itself to reiterating the image of the black migrant

as a poor and exploited worker who has no option but to dwell at the bottom ranks of society. In the terms of this analysis, I consider this a fissure in the ideological fabric of a text that sets out to present an Afro-affirmative and inclusive vision of the Dominican experience.

Irma, on the other hand, presents the *cocolo* experience in a more generalized sense, and from the viewpoint of the receiving culture. She occupies a particular position as a member of Dominican society who is, at the same time, a subject connected to the periphery of that society due to her status as an Afro-woman. This position and her advocacy for the *cocolos* as part of Dominican culture make her an element that seeks to contribute to the disintegration of the racist complex in Dominican society. The ways in which this character employs some of elements and stereotypes typically connected to an anti-Haitian/anti-Afro ideology could be interpreted as being subversive. However, at the same time, they also have the potential to be read at face value and hence present a fissure in her Afro-inclusive discourse. Both of these examples evidence again the complexity and intertwining of ideological currents in the make up of human relations and experiences. Both examples include traces of anti-and pro-Afro discourse, evincing the abstract nature of any one-sided articulated discourse and its distance to actual practice, which is much more multifaceted.

4.3 WHERE ARE THE HAITIANS?

At this point, I would like to return to a topic that was mentioned at the beginning of this chapter. In contrast to the sugarcane novels, Haitian characters are—with a couple of very minor exceptions—completely absent from *Tiempo muerto*'s story, despite its setting in the *ingenio*. There are a couple of short references to their existence and role, which are enunciated by the

only two characters that—as I have already discussed—actively engage with the question of blackness and Afro-descent. Irma, in her letter addressed to Abraham Lincoln, refers to the gradual replacement of *cocolo braceros* by Haitians, starting with the U.S. invasion in 1916. “Cambiaron negros(as) de habla inglesa por negros(as) de habla creole porque estaban ahí mismo, del otro lado de nuestra frontera. Es decir, una vez más fueron ‘inteligentes’” (Stanley *Tiempo* 105). Through the use of the terms such as “negros” and “cambiaron,” Irma’s statement points out how both ethnic groups, due to their classification as black Others, were treated as merchandise, as replaceable objects that would be exploited for cheap labor by the booming sugar industry. Her criticism of this reality is certainly valid, yet she does not develop it any further. This is the only time that she mentions these subjects who have played such an important role in the configuration of Dominican racial realities, and who have been at the center of a dominant ideological current that denies any association with African roots. The disdain and rejection directed at Haitians by many of Irma’s Dominican compatriots and through dominant ideology is directly related to the discriminatory treatment that Afro subjects in general—including Afro-Dominicans and *cocolos*—have experienced over the past century. Why is the novel’s critical voice, the one that most directly advocates for a more Afro-inclusive way of defining Dominican history and identity, so hesitant in making allusions to and connections between the experience of Haitians, *cocolos*, and Afro-Dominicans?

Papabuelo, the other character who mentions the Haitians a couple of times, also does so referring back to the earlier 20th century, to the time when he first worked as a *bracero* in the canefields. His references do remind the reader of the sugarcane novels in the sense that they allude to the same environment dominated by migrant workers: “todos éramos ingleses, haitianos y uno y otro dominicano” (Stanley *Tiempo muerto* 110). They also use the same stereotypes

directed towards the Haitian subjects. He states that “inclusive, me llevaba bien con los haitianos. No había que tenerles tanto miedo como decían algunos. Su brujería y sus cosas ellos no se la hacían a todo el mundo. Tenía ciudado [...] porque saben bregar su cosa” (Stanley *Tiempo* 87). In essence, the *cocolo* subject describes the Haitian precisely in the terms that Dominican ideological discourse predicated at the time: as the Other, as a sorcerer, as someone worthy of inspiring fear.

In the rest of the narration, leading up to the closer present, there is no mention of Haitians at all. What does this almost absolute absence tell us? As I have pointed out earlier, Haitian *braceros* outnumbered the *cocolos* even back when *Papabuelo* arrived on the island, but even more so the closer we move towards the present. The majority of sugar workers in the Dominican Republic today are Haitian or of Haitian descent. How is it then that, in a novel set in the very space flooded with Haitian migrants, they are completely invisible? One explanation could be that the author wanted to focus on the *cocolos*, and left their Haitian counterparts out for that reason. However, an immediate counter-argument comes to mind: that the Haitians must have been part of that *cocolo* experience, due to their overwhelming presence in the same space of the *ingenio*. It seems counterintuitive that throughout all the activity and movement that form part of the plot, none of the characters have any kind of personal encounter—not even tangentially—with a Haitian individual. The two short instances where *Papabuelo* mentions them—chronologically speaking—at the beginning of his trajectory in the Dominican Republic, and their subsequent complete absence from the plot make it seem as if they had vanished completely from the characters’ universe. Naturally, as we are talking about a fictional universe within a text, and not reality itself, I am not attempting to argue that the author had any kind of obligation to include the Haitians. Rather, I am claiming that it was a *deliberate* choice to have

these subjects remain invisible, particularly since this work is often described as reflecting historical realities lived by the *cocolos*.

In sum, I argue the Haitians make up part of this reality, but the author chose to leave them out of the story. This absence, then, presents a fissure in a text that tends to follow an Afro-inclusive and anti-racist ideology, seeking to reveal and criticize the injustices the *cocolos* have experienced based on their phenotype and on their cultural and linguistic difference to the Dominicans. Its advocacy falls short precisely because of this fissure, because of the purposeful leaving out of the Haitian, in the Dominican Republic *the* symbol of blackness, target of the severest of racial discriminations. This has several consequences, two of which—in a sense complimentary—I would like to point out: by having the Haitians remain invisible, the text successfully establishes a difference and a distance between them and the *cocolos*.⁶⁸ This disassociation helps establish a more “Dominican” view of the West Indian migrants. In other words, avoiding the textual presence and association with those Afro subjects that Dominican identity has long marked as perfect opposites helps the *cocolos* appear more integrated into the nation. At the same time, this *cocolo* integration in a sense mimicks the exclusion predicated by nationalist discourse: in order to become more like the Dominicans, they must become less like the Haitians.

The absence of Haitians may also make the text appear less threatening to the establishment, and to those who may be “on the fence” about their ideological position. Is this possibly the factor that makes a difference between the success of this book and the silence surrounding *La avalancha*? In literature, we have seen that the *cocolos* were from the outset

⁶⁸ As I already mentioned in the introduction, the origin of the term *cocolo*, albeit not entirely clear, is most likely a reference to being black and an association with the Haitians. Norberto James says that in his childhood “el término cocolo compartía rango con maldito haitiano” (Inoa 31).

represented as somewhat preferable to the Haitians. Are they—now that, in the words of Irma, they have almost become a part of Dominican culture, one of the Dominican ethnicities—considered “safe” in opposition to the Haitian “threat”? Is it acceptable to talk about their plight as Afro-descendants, as it is cloaked in references to the past (such as, for example, *Papabuelo*’s story, his insistence on blackness and the way it gets treated by the Dominicans and elites and those in charge)? May talking about the *cocolos* be Stanley’s way to talk about racial issues in the Dominican Republic without being too radical, without touching the “forbidden” subject of the Haitians? Later in his career, when he is already much more established as a writer and intellectual figure, he directly and explicitly recreates the experience of Haitians, the treatment, discrimination, deportation that they suffer. He does so, for instance, in his collection of short stories titled “La piel acosada” (2007), which won a prize in Italy, and was notably published after Matos Moquete’s *La avalancha*. If this is indeed the case, it may tell us a lot about the stigma and taboos that still surround the topic of the Haitian in the Dominican Republic, and also about choices that an intellectual who engages with topics that run counter to an anti-Afro ideology must face at the beginning of this millennium. In essence, one of the main questions that connects *Tiempo muerto* and *La avalancha* is the following: What does it mean when, of the two contemporary novels recounting and the integration and intermingling of black migrants and Dominicans on Dominican soil, the one that speaks about *cocolos* receives widespread critical acclaim, while the other—written by an equally talented and renowned author—that concerns Haitians is received with virtual silence?

5.0 CHAPTER FIVE

LA AVALANCHA: LEYENDA NEGRA: TOO CLOSE FOR COMFORT

Before addressing the question of why a novel depicting *cocolos* receives much more critical attention than one of equal quality depicting Haitians, it is essential to proceed with the analysis of *La avalancha: leyenda negra*. Its author Manuel Matos Moquete, like Avelino Stanley, was brought up in a provincial area of the Dominican Republic. In contrast to the creator of *Tiempo muerto*, he was fortunate to come from a family of well-off farmers, which provided him with the means to study and develop intellectually. Despite of his belonging to the old land-owning elites, Matos Moquete became politically affiliated with the left as a young man, and started writing for leftist newspapers like *Libertad*. His activism finally led to his incarceration, followed by a seven-year long exile to France (1975-82). The author himself, in an interview with the Cuban writer Ernesto R. del Valle, connects his militancy with what he sees as the purpose of his writing: “Como fui militante político, también escribo para comunicar cosas que quiero que los demás conozcan. No soy un escritor que escribe para mi mismo.” This claim suggests that his ideological preferences have a strong influence on his creative work. It also suggests that the writer seeks to actively influence his readers, and have them engage not only with the artistic value of his work, but also with the content and the socio-political reflections included in the narrative. This is a relevant fact for my analysis of *La avalancha*, because it reveals an intentionality on the part of the author to encourage the reader to think about and

question some of the concepts that inform the way we perceive ourselves and others politically, socially, and culturally.

Within a few years upon his return to the Dominican Republic, Matos Moquete became well established as a writer and intellectual, winning a prize for his first novel *En el atascadero* (1984), and numerous others thereafter (del Valle). In contrast to Avelino Stanley, who was just beginning his career when he wrote *Tiempo muerto*, by the time *La avalancha* was published in 2006 Matos Moquete was at a point where he enjoyed relative creative freedom, being that he was already a nationally respected writer, linguist, and educator. The professional situation surrounding the production of his text, then, was different from Stanley, and may be one of the explanatory factors of how each work represents and engages with questions of identity negotiation and the underlying ideologies that drive them. In other words, Matos Moquete may have seen less reason than Stanley to be careful not to offend those elements of society that, ideologically speaking, belong to a more conservative camp, particularly in their views of Afro-descendant migrants and their place in society. Thus, the author of *La avalancha* took the liberty to be much more assertive in his representation of the different ideological facets that inform identity discourse in the Dominican Republic, particularly in regards to Haitians. In the following analysis I show that this text does not contain fissures in a principal ideological undercurrent, which would suggest a diversion from a rigid ideological direction, something already seen in the sugarcane novels, and to a lesser extent, in Stanley's work. Rather, Matos Moquete's novel openly and directly showcases and engages with opposite ideological perspectives that are both in line with and against the racist discourse that culminated under Trujillo, and whose specters are still very much alive in Dominican thinking about identity today.

La avalancha—leyenda negra represents a fictionalized version of the relationship between Dominicans and Haitians in a Santo Domingo neighborhood formerly referred to as *Los Hospedajes*, but now called *Petit Haiti*.⁶⁹ It focuses on anti-Haitian clichés and stereotypes, and how they initially affect the urban cohabitation of the two groups, but also how the substance of these concepts is diluted and continuously diminishes due to the complex experience of everyday sharing and interaction. The plot develops in a present that is not clearly delimited; throughout the text vague references are made to a variety of historical markers such as Aristide's presidency, HIV, and the increased presence of Haitian migrant workers in urban construction projects. The past is laden with a feeling of nostalgia, in a fashion similar to the sugarcane novels; it is represented in an idyllic fashion, as a paradisiacal world that has succumbed to the corrupting forces that are working in the present.

In terms of its setting, the text certainly follows contemporary trends within Dominican literature, namely the “new Dominican novel,” which shifted from a prior focus on rural areas to a setting in urban environments, coinciding with much greater concentration of the population in the country's cities.⁷⁰ However, the works that belong to this movement generally engage with the “Haitian question” at most tangentially. In contrast, *La avalancha* also literarily reflects the above-mentioned increased presence of these migrants in the urban space: “Over the past 20 years an increasingly large number of migrants have moved away from agricultural work and have sought work in cities and towns. This move from rural to urban areas has increased the

⁶⁹ This neighborhood is modeled on a real area in Santo Domingo that is generally referred to as *Pequeño Haiti*. As in Matos Moquete's novel, the real *Pequeño Haiti* stretches from behind the *Mercado Modelo* along the Calle Benito González, reaching almost to the city's central firefighter's station.

⁷⁰ By 2010, about seventy percent of the Dominican population was concentrated in urban areas. (Geohive). One example of the “new Dominican novel” representing this space and its intricacies is Rita Indiana Hernández's *La estrategia de Chochueca: novela* (2003).

overall visibility of Haitian migrant workers and has been used by some to create the fear of a ‘peaceful invasion’ of Haitians” (Amnesty International 5). In a way, Matos Moquete’s text mimics such a “peaceful invasion,” which has been the cornerstone of anti-Haitian discourse at least since Trujillo’s days. The novel fictionally showcases what can happen during the complex process of cohabitation, of intermixing and intermingling on a daily basis, resulting in an inevitable fusion of the cultures that meet in this space on the one hand, but in persistent clash and conflict on the other. *La avalancha* can be read as a warning: there is violence, albeit much more imagined than real; the previous mode of living, what conservatives would denominate “Dominican” culture, is transformed and invariably changed. Yet, the text can simultaneously be read as an assurance that things are not as bad as they seem, that Dominicans and Haitians are not so incompatible or different altogether. Through the juxtaposing of these two contrasting visions, the work points to the fact that identity negotiations in lived experience happen somewhere in the middle, in the grey zone, not at the ideological poles.

In order to reveal these divergent perspectives, the novel exposes Dominican conceptions of identity that are based entirely on stereotypes of Haitian otherness and opposition, to then ironically dismantle and destabilize them. Julia Borst, who is one of the very few voices to break the critical silence surrounding the novel, makes such an argument of ironic deconstruction.⁷¹ I use her analysis as a point of departure for this investigation, which seeks to probe into how the text materializes the complexities of identity negotiation through the inclusion of multiple discourses. I argue that doubt is the principal connector and marker of these discourses in the

⁷¹ For a detailed discussion of how this ironic deconstruction works, please see Borst’s article titled “Identitäts- und Alteritätsdiskurse in der Dominikanischen Republik und ihre Demaskierung in Matos Moquetes Roman *La Avalancha*” (“Unmasking of Discourses of Identity and Alterity in the Dominican Republic in Matos Moquete’s Novel *La Avalancha*,” translation mine).

narrative framework and in the construction and presentation of the plot and its elements. This environment of uncertainty created by the novel runs counter any conception of Dominican identity as a fixed and stable, as rigid or exclusionary, but rather presents it as a porous and complex ongoing process that cannot deny the presence or impact of either progressive or conservative attitudes towards Afro subjects.

5.1 THE BLACK LEGEND: PROVOKING DOUBT THROUGH REPETITION, CONTRADICTION, AND AMBIVALENCE

From the outset, the reader of *La avalancha* is encouraged to doubt. Before the actual narration of the plot begins, we encounter a notice or a warning, stating that what is being reported in the story is a black *legend*, which can be defined as “a story coming down from the past; especially one popularly regarded as historical although not verifiable” (Miriam Webster). It is a second-hand account originally pronounced in a confusing mixed language referred to as “creñol.” We are alerted that “nada es inventado, nada es real” (Matos Moquete 7). Through this technique of fictionalizing what is already fiction, the text is leaning narratively closer to a historical account. It is making a politically motivated social statement by affirming that what happens in this story could be fiction, but also non-fiction (I have already discussed the connection that the author draws between his political motivation and his creative writing). This claim suggests that not only the writing as art, but also the content itself carries meaning. The obvious ambivalence inherent in the statement cited above is also characteristic for the rest of the novel, a concept that I will explore a little further on in this analysis.

The plot is subdivided into ten chapters. Instead of considerable action or great events that would propel the story forward, the anecdote focuses on small quotidian details about the way people live and think. The construction of a tower in the neighborhood's center—a project carried out with the help of Haitian migrant workers—is the one element that progresses at a steady pace—story by story—as the plot advances. Many other parts reappear throughout the text in a quasi-cyclical manner, including references to the *Mercado modelo* as a binational space, the *black legend* and its advocates, the role of economics in the changing face of *Petit Haiti*, corruptive law enforcement, the character Irena, and inadequate solutions to migration issues. In addressing such themes, the attention swings back and forth between Haitian and Dominican characters, between a multitude of perspectives of the daily activities and interactions in *Petit Haiti*, and does not concentrate on any particular viewpoint for an extended amount of time. This way, neither perspective is granted prevalence, and neither is entirely convincing in its own right. In that sense, the form of the narration in itself is conducive to doubt and uncertainty, as it does not lie out an argument in favor of a specific point of view. Rather, the reader him or herself has to decide whether to identify with a particular angle or ideological discourse, and even if he or she does so, he or she is invited to doubt or reconsider immediately, since a counter—perspective often follows soon after the initial way of looking at something is presented.

Not only do the viewpoints alternate, however; on many occasions the text openly contradicts itself and its assertions. For example, the claim that “la voz de Carina era como la voz del barbero, aunque podría ser la del joyero. ¿Acaso de quién era la voz?” is followed by the statement that “la del barbero era voz inconfundible” (Matos Moquete 9-10). It is said that the black legend was propagated by the hairdresser as “en su boca la leyenda negra renacía” (Matos

Moquete 10), while shortly after “nadie era responsable de la leyenda negra” (Matos Moquete 36). Other examples include blaming the Haitians to have taken over the neighborhood including the Dominicans’ houses, yet stating later that they are confined to the tower they are constructing in the center. They are described as delinquents of the worst kind—part of a rigid and dangerous criminal organization—yet their presence in *Petit Haïti* is completely chaotic. The same criminal organization referred to as *La Mano Negra*, as well as local entrepreneurs including those that run the construction business, are blamed for causing the unwanted human avalanche by bringing exuberant numbers of Haitians to *Petit Haïti*. When the reader is later introduced to the only individual that commits an actual crime in the whole novel—a Dominican who shoots a Haitian street vendor over a cup of coffee—claims that “como no creía en cuentos ni leyenda de religión y superstición, desdenfundó su arma,” to shortly after explain that “lo derribó a balazos al sentirse amenazado por el hechizo que la victima preparaba en su contra” (80). These contradictions greatly undermine the plausibility of the events recounted, and therefore add to an increased sense of ambiguity and uncertainty that corresponds to the novel’s aim to unsettle rigid and absolute truths as pillars of identity construction.

The narrative voice itself, through the admission that it is repeating a dubious version of potentially (non) fictional events, counters the role that is traditionally ascribed to a third person omniscient narrator. In literature, the latter usually represents a relatively trustworthy version of the narrative’s universe, since through his access to all of the relevant information he can represent a more complete picture to the reader. However, the third person narrator in this text is a transcriber of an inaccessible mixed language, a fact that he reminds the reader of almost half way through the plot. Switching briefly to a first person voice—in itself much less objective—he tells the reader that at M’a Guiselle’s corner, the place from where he observes and reports

what was happening in the neighborhood, “entre sorbo y sorbo me entretenía con la conversación de los haitianos en un idioma que me esforzaba en descifrar” (Matos Moquete 48). Even with the Dominican characters, the narrator is incapable of clearly discerning or accrediting their exclamations to a specific voice. On the very first page, as I have already pointed out above, he describes how Carina’s, the barber’s, and the jeweler’s voices were easily confused.

In addition, he describes that his own identity is questionable in the eyes of the locale’s owner, adding another layer to the doubt surrounding his persona: “[ella] sabía que yo no era del barrio y me miraba con cautela, temerosa. [...] Me tomaba por un agente the Migración” (Matos Moquete 48). Would the people surrounding him continue to naturally speak about their activities and observations if they thought he was a government agent, and more specifically a member of immigration services? All of these elements help alert the reader to the fact that he or she must not blindly accept the veracity of what is presented to him without any profound consideration.

Intercalated throughout the narrative we find repetitive musings about what is referred to as a *black legend*. This legend essentially describes how the Haitians are invading and corrupting the area through their criminal activity and witchcraft. They are very similar in what they describe, usually a range of barbarous atrocities, with the details altered a little each time they are re-told: “Se hablaba [...] de dos haitianos que mataron a un comerciante decapitándolo en el mismo mercado” (24). “El asesinato de un pordiosero por manos desconocidas en el mercado se vivía en el Petit Haití con dolor y temor. Se sospechaba de cada haitiano” (36). “Se narraba cómo persiguieron a un haitiano que decapitó a su patrón para robarle la cartera” (46). The way in which the *black legend* is being retold imitates the format of a rumor, which can be defined as “information or a story that is passed from person to person but has not been proven to

be true” (Merriam-Webster). This format then puts into textual practice what is already announced in the warning at the beginning of the book—blurring the boundary between fact and fiction. The text asks the reader to carefully evaluate the accusations against those deemed to be Others, not refuting the possibility that criminal activity may emanate from them, but neither affirming its existence or scale. This highlights the subjectivity that is intrinsic to the process of constructing how we view others, marking it as a complex negotiation rather than a fixed state.

Not only is the *black legend* repeated in the form of a rumor; but the severity of the crimes being committed also augments with each re-telling. Eventually, a point is reached where this process of exaggeration severely impedes the plausibility of what is being reported. The group of victims expands continuously to ultimately transverse any kind of limit, the legend focuses on the most abject crimes that target the most vulnerable members of society. “Un niño de apenas siete con trastornos mentales fue degollado por uno de la banda. La muerte de una niña, con violación incluida, se agregaba a la agenda horripilante de crímenes” (Matos Moquete 43). Not only the selection of the victims, but also the techniques used in the ever-more frequent assassinations become more and more barbaric, as we see in the following examples: “El descuartizamiento estaba al orden del día” (Matos Moquete 46); or “tres haitianos dieron muerte a machetazos a una niña de nueve años cercenándole la cabeza con machetes tan afilados que cortaban un pelo en el aire” (Matos Moquete 58). This is an example of how the text employs exaggeration in order to incite more doubt in the reader, to let the crimes reported in connection to the *black legend* appear in a light of fabrication.

This sense of exaggeration is furthered by word choice. The repetition of terms that relate to the concept underlying a specific passage is deliberate and consistent, as we can see in the following example (which is one among many, as this technique is used throughout the text).

Towards the beginning of the story, the text recounts the moment in which Haitian crime and sorcery became prevalent in the neighborhood. Within one single page, there is an overwhelming accumulation of terminology related to the notion of sorcery, for example: “magia negra,” “maleficios,” “demonios,” “brujas,” “maldición,” “diablos,” “exorcista,” “brujería,” “endemoniados,” “poseedores de espíritus” (Matos Moquete 13). About in the middle of that page, sorcery connects with the idea of crime, and the related terminology continues over the next page: “crimen,” “robos,” “delincuencia,” “ladrones,” “criminals,” “cárceles,” “fechorías,” “cadáveres” (Matos Moquete 13-14). In order to concentrate these repetitions even further, at various points throughout the work, a number of words with related meanings are simply enumerated in a list: “los cadáveres tenían el rostro torcido, contraído, atormentado” (17). Among the examples for the use of this technique also figures the description of the type of criminals that supposedly operate in Petit Haïti: “entre los buscados había personajes acusados de conspiración, narcotraficantes internacionales, asesinos a sueldo, dueños de redes de tráfico de personas: niños, mujeres, trabajadores ilegales,” and their activities “se les veía vagando, practicando juegos de azar, robando en los comercios, atracando en plena vía y violando gente” (68). In this way, the language itself complements and enhances the exaggeration that helps create the sense of doubt and irony that is prevalent throughout *La avalancha*.

Having looked at the *black legend* as an example for some of the technical aspects the text employs in order to create doubt and present different perspectives, I would like to call the attention to the term itself. The mere choice of the phrase “Black Legend” as title as well as notion is ironic. During the middle of the last millennium, this concept was “invented” by other European powers against the Spanish colonizers and their practices in the New World.

La Leyenda Negra (the [Spanish Black Legend](#)), one of the Americas' most widespread and deep-seated cultural stereotypes, [...] was seeded in the foreign policy of Britain, her New England colonies, and her allies during the seventeenth-century age of exploration to demonize Spain, her allies, and the colonies of New Spain in their competition for “New World” hegemony. (“Stereotypes”)

In the legend, the Spanish were marked as being particularly cruel and inhuman in their treatment of the indigenous populations in the newly conquered territories, traits they were said to have had already exhibited prior to this time during the Inquisition and the subsequent persecution of Moors and Jews (Keen 708). The legend tells of a (Hispanic) people and a nation that is “inquisitorial, ignorante, fanática, incapaz de figurar entre pueblos cultos [...], dispuesta siempre a las represiones violentas, enemiga del progreso y de las innovaciones” (Molina Martínez 14). It speaks of the unforgiving supplanting of local religion by an overpowering Catholicism, of the importation of diseases that wiped out a significant part of the local population. Furthermore, the Spaniards were accused of being a sort of savage and uncultured exception to the otherwise civilized and progressive community of European colonizers: “de que nuestra Patria [España] constituye, desde el punto de vista de la tolerancia, de la cultura y del progreso político una excepción lamentable dentro del grupo de las naciones europeas” (Molina Martínez 14).

Considering such a definition of the Black Legend, it soon becomes clear that many characteristics applied to the Spanish conquerors overlap with the way in which the Haitians—who according to conservative ideology intent to conquer Quisqueya—are depicted in Mates Moquete’s novel. They are represented as ignorant, cruel, savage beings, which are arriving in

hordes to subjugate the Dominican's land and livelihood. They are the inescapable avalanche that covers and buries, without discrimination, everything that dares to cross its path of destruction as they "invade" the Eastern part of the island, or more particularly, the *Petit Haiti* neighborhood of Santo Domingo. Just like the Spaniards in the Black Legend, Haitians are said to be uncultured; in the Dominican imaginary, no worthy works of literature are created in the Western part of the island. Haitian paintings offered in the central market place are, for example, described as "cuadros con motivos folklóricos y populares de Haití [...] es pintura naïve [...] Era pintura sin valor y de gente salvaje" (Matos Moquete 92). ⁷² *La avalancha*'s black legend furthermore suggests that Haitians bring with them a diabolical religion that eventually overpowers and replaces regional spiritual practices and beliefs, as Catholicism had done when the Spaniards arrived and conquered these islands: "no dudo que ahora vengan con el demonio" (Matos Moquete 77). The fear of this religion goes so far that it leads to direct association of the migrants to the devil: "aquí la cara del diablo es la de los haitianos" (78). The character Carina makes constant allusions to worms creeping up around her, Haitian women —like the protagonist Irena— are said to charm Dominican men with the help of their Vodou-sorcery, ⁷³ and at later in the novel, almost all people watching the funeral parade for a slain Haitian "devil" succumb to the music and dance and participate in the ceremony. Finally, Haitians are said to bring diseases: "Los haitianos han traído la malaria, cosa nunca vista en estos predios. Del dengue no se diga (Matos Moquete 77). The jeweler, one of the "local" characters in the novel,

⁷² As part of the contradictions that are an inherent part of the textual fabric and that I have already discussed in relation to the use of exaggeration, this claim is soon countered by naming some of the most prevalent Haitian authors of the twentieth century: Jacques Romain, Jacques Stéphen Alexis, and René Depestre (Matos Moquete 94); as well as some of the nation's greatest painters "la pintura de un Tigá, un Cedor o un André Pierre corresponden al gran arte universal" (Matos Moquete 93).

⁷³ According to Murrell, "Vodou" is the preferred spelling of this Haitian religion (77-79).

sums it up in the following way: “Los haitianos nos llenan de enfermedades infamantes y contagiosas, propagan la delincuencia, la brujería y el atraso” (20). Given these similarities, I then argue that the text draws a direct parallel between the Spanish Black Legend and the Haitian “invasion” of Santo Domingo’s neighborhood formerly called *Los Hospedajes*, now referred to as *Petit Haiti*.

The textual references to the *leyenda negra* are numerous (see, for instance, pages 24, 36, 37, 46, 58, 64, and 96). Interestingly enough, they are principally concentrated in the first part of the novel, where the relationship between local Dominicans and migrant Haitians is mostly defined in terms of constructed difference, where the perspectives of the different characters are still most discernable. It reiterates the national rhetoric employed by the political elites seeking a Dominican identity construction based on the opposition to the first self-defined Black republic in the Western hemisphere. If we consider the ideological and political background to the creation of the Black Legend, namely the attempt to morally disqualify and incite animosity against Spain and its people, it soon becomes clear that the depiction of Haitian migrants in a manner similar to that of the Spaniards carries a heavy ideological charge. The author uses the historical parallel to show how—through the process of the construction of Dominican national identity—negative racial, social, and cultural stereotypes were exploited by political elites in a process of “Othering” the Western inhabitants of the island of Hispaniola. The concentration of such claims in the first half of *La avalancha* then represents how these stereotypes are deeply engrained in the Dominican people’s perception of themselves and of their neighbors, how the legend serves continuously to evoke negative images of Haitian (migrants), and how it keeps alive the idea that this animosity is a permanent state necessary to ensure the survival and progress of the Dominican nation (for example in terms of competition for employment). While

the anti-Haitian doctrine is no longer part of the *official* ideology (Wooding and Mosley-Williams 94), public discourse seems to tell a different story of “an atmosphere of often-intense anti-Haitian rhetoric abetted by major political figures, the military and the police“ (*National Coalition of Haitian Rights*, cited in Borst). The text’s use of the Black Legend analogy may then point to the fact that maintaining alive the fear of an invasion of the Dominican Republic by Haitian workers and their descendants, the interests of some political elites are still served.

Yet in the second half of the plot, the roles are reversed, at least in relation to the crimes that are plaguing the neighborhood and that make up the core concern (or the core excuse) to keep the *black legend* alive. The atrocities that during the first half were committed by the Haitians are now directed at individuals identified as Haitians. At first, the suggestion is vague and very much implied through the names and occupation of the victims: “tres obreros de la torre fueron muertos a puñadas por desconocidos: Sosa Notie, Stima Roscia y Chapi Pie” (Matos Moquete 64). Later it is stated directly that the attacks were targeting Haitians (Matos Moquete 96). Those originally indicted as perpetrators now become victims. It is also significant to consider the irony contained in the fact that the way that the Haitian’s crimes described in the *black legend’s* initial rounds mimics the type of atrocities that were actually committed against this group during *El corte* of 1937 (for example the use of machetes, and the ruthless killing of anyone that was identified as Haitian, including women and children). To ridicule the claims made by those propagating the *black legend* in the novel even more, the solution to this slaughter—in *Petit Haití* said to be carried out by the Haitians—is a repetition of the Massacre, in other words, to fight the crime with more of the same crime, only exchanging the group at the receiving end. “Hay que repetir la dosis del treintisiete. Como para cualquier enfermedad como el VIH una dosis no basta; la medicina hay que dársela al enfermo cuantas veces la necesite”

(65). In such a situation, who is the real perpetrator, who is the real victim? The groups are becoming much less distinguishable. We have already seen a similar type of unsettling of the victim-perpetrator binary in *Jengibre*, in the dialogues between Cipriano and Enerio that opened and closed the novel. In the case of Pérez Cabral's work, I consider this deconstruction as a fissure in the ideological fabric of the text. In *Tiempo muerto*, it challenges the idea that roles and identities are fixed and stable through the implementation of doubt in the reader, thereby disconcerting any notions of simplistic and rigid ideology as the basis for real life relations.

La avalancha also picks up on another aspect of the Spanish Black Legend: at play here is the stereotype of the Spaniard—and by extension his Hispanic descendants (including in Latin America and the Caribbean)—as a cruel and immoral individual that exploits and oppresses those he perceives to be his “Others,” including indigenous people, non-Catholics, and slaves. After a first reading, it may seem that *La Avalancha* reiterates this typecast in its representation of the Dominicans' treatment of Haitian migrants, who follow a Vodou religion and are the descendants of slaves, thereby occupying the category of the “Other” vis-à-vis the Hispanic Dominican locals. The frequent allusion to trafficking of laborers and their description as *mercancía*—something that I will discuss more in detail a little later in this analysis—reminds us immediately of the Middle Passage during Colonial times. Haitian workers have to live at a construction site, which doubles as their place of accommodation. Their living conditions are extremely sub-standard: “Los haitianos trabajaban y vivían en la torre. El Ingeniero les había improvisado un dormitorio hecho de blocs y zinc superpuestos. [...] La cocina y la letrina estaban separados por una hilera de ladrillos intercalados” (Matos Moquete 36). They are confined to this environment in a quasi-prison fashion: “Todos estaban circunscritos a ese ámbito con salidas controladas los sábados después del mediodía y los domingos” (Matos Moquete 37).

The violence and persecutions that the text reports against the Haitians in *Petit Haiti* also evidence the cruelty of the Hispanics; there is even a direct reference to the Black Legend in this context: “Irena disfrutaba de su suite, alejada de la leyenda negra, protegida de la ola de violencia y decapitaciones contra los haitianos. Los ataques no cesaban. Se amenazaban de muerte, se agredían, se expulsaban, se detenían, se repatriaban, se quemaban, se desataban cacerías. Se hablaba de repetir lo del treintisiete. Se discriminaba” (Matos Moquete 96).

The way that the narrator reports on these events demonstrate what I have already discussed about the use of exaggeration. This literary device is used to make the actual crimes committed by the Hispanic perpetrators seem more severe, in a way mimicking the allegations made by the English against the Spaniards in the seventeenth century. First, the reference to “*la leyenda negra*” already signals to the reader that what follows is not necessarily verifiable. Second, the order in which the offenses are named seems somewhat erratic, there is no clear enumeration or increase in severity of the crimes. The narrator first mentions “decapitations” to later close the list stating that “discriminations” were taking place. This suggests that this was an enunciation of whatever possible crime came to mind at the moment, rather than true description of events. The only actual example given of an assault on a Haitian is the already mentioned murder of a character named Yan Lily, who became the victim of the superstition of his Dominican assassin, a grocer. This individual claimed that Yan Lily was dressed like the devil and tried to use sorcery to harm him and his business. According to a different account by the Veteran, however, the grocer was merely avaricious and instead of paying the victim—a poor street vendor—for a cup of coffee from his cart, he shot him dead (Matos Moquete 80-81). The first account feeds right into the *black legend* and the Hispanics’ fear of the black and non-Catholic “Other,” while the second calls into question that the issue was at all related to an act of

xenophobia or cruelty towards Haitians. It rather points to a character flaw in the grocer that regrettably led to a person's death, but not necessarily because of that individual's "Otherness." Once again, the text unsettles simplistic and clear-cut perceptions of relations between locals and migrants, the use of exaggeration and the representation of multiple perspectives of the event add ambiguity and invite the reader to question the validity of rigid categorizations—stereotypes—to assess the situation presented.

At this point, I would like to return to the concept of ambivalence that I mentioned at the beginning of this section about the *black legend*. I have already discussed the notion of a tension between the possibilities of interpretation and meaning related to Irma's character's representation of and relation to the *cocolos* in *Tiempo muerto*. This same type of ambivalence can be found all throughout *La avalancha*, as we can see in this brief selection of examples. They further emphasize the ironic undertone that is so characteristic of this text.

The jeweler, a character that is said to personify the traditional ways of the neighborhood, one of its conservative pillars, makes the first statement. "Manos firmes contra ellos [los haitianos], sean de aquí o de allá, tengan o no sotana, sean o no bendecidos por las grandes potencias" (Matos Moquete 20). This could be read as a mere call to apply harsh punishment to anyone who appears to be a Haitian delinquent, no matter what kind of professional disguise or argument they have to counter such accusations (a priest's cassock is usually a symbol for innocence and for immunity from punishment). On the other hand, the statement implies that the delinquents, or the Haitians, or both, could be Dominican or Haitian, could be Catholic or not, could have greater powers supporting them (whether spiritual or material, such as the support of the United States, for example, is left open). In other words, it is not really clear who the criminals are, who they are affiliated with, or how they could be identified.

The jeweler's wife Carina, the character who embodies the greatest ideological opposition to the Haitian presence in the neighborhood, vociferates the second example of ambivalence: “¡Ignorante! ¡Gente que no sabe nada! Esos no son extranjeros, son haitianos. Los únicos extranjeros que vienen aquí son los blancos” (Matos Moquete 21). This statement could be read in the sense that Haitians do not count as foreigners; as this category or label has traditionally been reserved for those who are white and have money, which is a stereotype of the North American or European business owner, military member, or tourist. However, this exclamation may also be interpreted as admitting that Haitians are not foreigners or strangers to Dominicans. Rather, Dominicans know them well; have a relationship and a history with them, even shared ancestry.⁷⁴ The tension between these two oppositional possibilities of interpretation is obvious, and incites uncertainty about the meaning of the passage.

But such ambivalence is not limited to the conservative Dominican perspective of the novel, as can be seen in the next two examples, which are associated with Haitian characters. “M’a Guiselle escuchaba los comentarios de la clientela. Estaba inquieta y en su adentro veía cosas que sus dioses le comunicaban. ‘Lo Malo anda detrás de esto; nunca cosas iguales sucedieron en este barrio’”(Matos Moquete 23). From the way it is written, it is unclear whether she is hearing this from the gods, or whether these are comments made by her clients. The decision is up to the reader. Either way, it makes the reader doubt. Would the gods associated with Haitian sorcery tell her negative things about the changes in the neighborhood, when these changes are said to be brought on precisely with the help of Vodou witchcraft summoned by the

⁷⁴ Already at the beginning of the narration, the author makes a literary reference to a work that celebrates the Dominican descent as a mixture of Haitian—and with that the African—and Nordic blood: the poem *Yelidá* by the Dominican writer Tomás Hernández Franco, first published in 1942 (Matos Moquete 13).

Haitians themselves? When read in the sense that M'a Guiselle's clients are expressing opinions about the borough referencing its past, the interpretations are also multiple. It has been made clear that at least part of the old woman's clients are Haitians, and if they made a statement like the one above it could suggest that they had been part of the neighborhood for quite a while rather than just arriving as part of this recent "peaceful invasion." It could also imply that Dominicans were present in M'a Guiselle's corner, drinking what was just described as a devilish brew a couple of lines earlier. In short, this example suggests a mixed space of encounters, and leaves the reader with very little clarity about who is who, who commits crimes, and incites doubt about the veracity of any discourse about "Lo Malo."

The final example of the text's brilliant employment of ambivalence in meaning is the following reference made about Irena, a central character that serves as one of the axes around which the expression of anti-Haitian sentiment is constructed and at the same time deconstructed (I analyze her role more fully later). "Irena se sentía asediada por esos acontecimientos cada vez que iba a la Esquina de M'a Guiselle" (97). It remains unclear which events are provoking such a reaction in the young Haitian woman. In the previous two paragraphs, there are references to violence, to persecutions, to racial hatred, to breakouts from prison, to lynching, to the destruction of homes. While the Haitians are mentioned as the victims of a racist perspective, it is not clear that they are the sole point of reference for the occurrences that are part of the list, particularly since earlier in the text some of these activities were clearly associated with the Haitian delinquency that was invading the neighborhood. The choice of the term "asediada" is a key to the uncertainty inherent in the statement. Is Irena simply bothered by these events, or does she, as a Haitian, feel literally and personally attacked?

By presenting events or opinions that can be read in at least two different ways, the text reminds us that the truth of many matters is not found within rigid generalizations located at opposite poles of the ideological spectrum, but rather somewhere in the middle. This type of ambivalence serves as another effective technique to give the narration a sense of uncertainty and doubt. It shows that discourse is made up of words that can be interpreted in different ways. There is nothing necessarily fixed about how it must be understood, and its articulation and its interpretation is a place of negotiation between the enunciator and the listener. The ambivalence present in *La avalancha* forces the reader to actively participate in such a negotiation process in order to create what the text's means to him personally. The work's ideological direction—including its representation of Afro subjects and of Dominican identity—therefore become a personal practice of negotiation, rather than being the result of an imposed and rigid ideological discourse. In that sense, they mimic the reality of the process of identity formation, a course that the reader can experience him or herself as he or she advances in the text. The sections of the text that can be read either way speak about the impossibility to attach or fix Dominican identity to rigid categories of “us” and “them,” when the truth is much more fluid than a perfect oppositional difference.

5.2 STEREOTYPES, RACE-NAMING, AND THE USE OF LANGUAGE

Having reviewed some of the devices that *La avalancha* incorporates in its representation of Afro subjects through the example of the *black legend*, it is now time to discuss the elements of (race) naming and also the use of language. The reiteration and deconstruction of stereotypes about Haitians, of course, play a dominant role in this process.

The fact that the Spanish black legend is *black* is another one of the elements that Matos Moquete makes use of and plays with in the analogy he draws to the situation of Haitian migrants in Santo Domingo. The text literally ties the color of the legend to the racial question that has led to the perception of the Haitian as “Other.” One of the pillars of anti-Haitianism, in the Dominican Republic—as has already been discussed—is the constructed racial difference between the inhabitants of the Eastern and Western parts of the island. Haitians, in this context, are usually depicted as descendants of black African slaves, where Dominicans do not self-identify as *negros*, but rather as *indios*, based on the myth that they are the *mestizo* offspring of Spanish conquerors and Taíno Indians (Sagás 47, Valerio-Holguín 79). This difference is useful to the operation of constructing a national identity in opposition to the Haitian, whose blackness is used as a counterpoint in order to construct the racial “whiteness” of the Dominican. It also serves to hide a common African past, marking yet another difference between the two populations. In Matos Moquete’s text, the Haitians are continuously referred to as blacks, particularly in the utterances by Dominican characters. The beginning of the novel relates the reason for the infiltration of the city by Haitians—a process referred to as a curse (alluding once again to the sorcery associated with Vodou). The story told is that everything began with the mistaken condemnation of the Haitian Honson Baliat, “el único negro presente en el lugar” (Matos Moquete 12). When the barber contemplates how to get rid of the Haitians he envisions “una limpieza que acabe con tantos negros en las calles” (59). When something is referred to as black in the text, particularly in the first half of the novel, it is often followed by a repetition of negative descriptors that evoke stereotypes associated with Afro-descendants. That way, the term *negro/a* itself becomes negatively charged. For example, in the pages following the description of the above mentioned Honson Baliat, the term “negro” is repeated along with descriptions of

crimes, sorcery referred to as *black* magic, and of the organization *La Mano Negra* and its criminal activities. The character Irena is referred to as “una negra haitiana” (Matos Moquete 23), the word order in this description placing the emphasis on her phenotype. The expression is immediately followed by terms such as “inacceptable,” “imperdonable,” and “indeseable.”

One of the ways in which the text alludes to blackness is through a play with the Western stereotype that Africans have a different and unpleasant smell. The text constantly reiterates that the immigrants from the Western part of the island are dirty, filthy, and that their foul stench is unbearable. We find such statements as “el mal olor que despedían los haitianos” (Matos Moquete 18), or “lo más distintivo era que a leguas se les reconocía por el mal olor. Y el color ni se diga” (Matos Moquete 55). Once again the text employs the literary device of exaggeration through repetition of related terms, creating an environment with a constant allusion to an aversive and offensive smell. In the pages surrounding the last quote, such terminology is concentrated, for instance “hedor,” “peste,” “mal olor,” “pudrición,” “grajo,” and “peste a diablos” (Matos Moquete 54-56). The ironic allusion to odor as a distinctive characteristic of black heritage is a technique that has been employed by other authors who have sought to deconstruct this Western prejudice against people of African descent. One example is the following stanza describing a *mulata*, taken from the poem “Ten con ten” by Puerto Rican poet Luis Palés Matos, one of the pioneers of the *poesía negra* movement of the 1930s:

Pasarías ante el mundo
por civil y ciudadana,
si tu axila -flor de sombra-
no difundiera en las plazas

el rugiente cebollín

que sofrien tus entrañas. (1932)

Through a counter-positioning of the unpleasant smell dissipated by the *mulata*'s armpits to the concepts of civility and citizenship, Palés Matos alludes to the association of that odor with savagery and "Otherness," two characteristics that in Matos Moquete's text are inherent features of the Haitian *negro*.⁷⁵ Considering that, racially speaking, about eighty percent of the Dominican population classify as being of African descent (Valerio-Holguín 79), it soon becomes apparent that the novel *La avalancha* exploits the stereotype of an "African smell" in order to unveil the hypocrisy that underlies the Dominican characters' repeated assertion that they are able to discern the black Haitian migrants because of their odor. Santo Domingo's neighborhood *Petit Haiti* is depicted as being inhabited mainly by the working class, as the principal characters' occupations such as barber, jeweler (with a fictive degree because his father did not want to spend the money to send him to school), florist, or veteran as well as the allusions to an open market and to the former neighborhood brothels reveal. This signals two things: there is a good probability that a considerable part of the "local" Dominican population is at least partially of Afro descent; and that the adoption of stereotypes and the subscription to an anti-Afro ideology is something that is integral not only to the political elite's vision, but also forms part of the ordinary population's perspective.

Until now, I have only considered the negative representation of blackness in the text. However, Matos Moquete's novel draws into question this very negativity through juxtaposing it

⁷⁵ Jerome Branche, in his discussion of this aspect of Palés's poem, mentions the Puerto Rican intellectual Zenón Cruz, who in "Narciso descubre su trasero" points to the racist association that the *Diccionario real de la academia española* between "el olor desagradable" and "los negros desaseados" (Negrismo 491). Matos Moquete's text assumes and ironically plays with this long-established stereotype about Afro-descendants.

with an exaggeratedly positive depiction of Irena, the principal female Haitian protagonist. Haitians in general “eran feos, ordinarios, ásperos y salvajes” (Matos Moquete 55), as the text continuously reminds us; yet Irena is different. At the same time that she is looked down upon because of her nationality and, most importantly, her blackness, she is also raised up on a pedestal, elevated to the status of an erotic muse through a process of exoticization. Once again, the text uses repetition, contradiction, and exaggeration in order to call into question any absolute truths about this character’s identity, and by extension, the identity of the Haitians in the neighborhood.

When introduced to her, the character Bello—the secondary engineer responsible for the construction of the central tower—physically separates the space between Irena and himself with a room divider, mimicking the border between the two countries. His Afro-phobic exclamation—“apártenme de la vista esa negra que afea mi oficina” (Matos Moquete 26)—is followed by the contradictory claim that the reason for his hatred towards her is not racism, but rather that he is homosexual. The negative image of Irena’s blackness is also subverted in the next paragraph, where it is said that she “exhibía con vanidosa soberbia su despampanante cuerpo de negra, de negra y joven, de negra sensual y gozosa” (Matos Moquete 26). “Su exótica presencia” (Matos Moquete 27) becomes that of a muse, of a statue, of a work of art. The term “negra” now appears next to “diosa” (Matos Moquete 27) and “irresistible artemisa” (Matos Moquete 28), and forms part of the description of the black body’s perfection and attractiveness. These attributes also earn her the approval of other male Dominican characters, despite their otherwise anti-Haitian discourse. The text recounts, for example, how the jeweler felt utterly repulsed by the Haitian presence, even comparing it to an invasion of crabs. This description is suddenly interrupted by a reference to Irena as “una impresionante mujer,” so striking that he “se apresuró a recibirla

impresionado por la grata presencia de la mujer” (Matos Moquete 32). Irena’s racial Otherness is here presented in an exaggeratedly positive light, evoking admiration, even a deep attraction; thus offering a different perspective to the one we have seen in the text so far. The purpose of this shift in representation is to complicate the image of the “Other” that the narrative conveys, playing with ideas of binary opposites that inform ideological discourse. The extreme difference between the two perspectives—blackness associated with absolute repulsion at the same time as godlike perfection—once again helps incite doubt in the attentive reader.

The way Irena is represented juxtaposes another set of opposing features, related to what I have just discussed. This female character’s elevation to the status of a sensual goddess contains another stereotype that has long been used to mark the Afro-descendant Other: hypersexualization. The appreciation Irena receives from other almost exclusively male characters is based on a desire that they feel towards her as an erotic object. She is described as the perfect sexual possession; her Dominican lover, the Engineer would not let her leave the office “sin que él le aplicara la fuerza sexual”; “la posesionó” for three days and three nights because “así le gustaban las mujeres para derribarlas” (Matos Moquete 28-9). He objectifies her as his “putica” and as “haitianita caliente” (Matos Moquete 100). The description of their carnal encounters clarifies that “no se hablaban de amor;” instead it is filled with terminology suggesting erotic stamina: “movimiento telúrico,” “firmemente erecto,” “instinto de macho cabrío,” “endurecido,” “se emperró,” “suspiro lascivo,” un estremecido palpitar,” and “fornicador.” Within this very description, the text even draws a parallel between Irena and the construction business, as if she was a real object like a building, an object to satisfy the Engineer’s drive to demolish.

However, the novel does not limit Irena to the position of the black exotic female object at the mercy of the Dominican male. Being viewed as having hypersexual powers also bestows agency upon her character: “Ella era el trofeo del Ingeniero, la que dominaba su vida, su trabajo y sus preferencias, desde aquel derroche de sexo en la oficina” (29). The contradiction between the two representations is blatant; she is described as an object and at the same time as the controlling agent of the character who objectifies her. Irena does not act despite her difference but rather through it, taking advantage of the racial exoticization of her person in order to dominate a Dominican man in a privileged position.

While her sensuality is a repetitive element throughout the narrative, Irena’s representation also goes beyond that of an erotic toy: she speaks four languages, studies architecture, and uses her knowledge to teach her lover and his friends that, contrary to the image that many Dominicans have of Haiti, the country has produced a variety of artists and writers of international prestige. As was the case in *Tiempo muerto*, it is an Afro woman who counteracts the discriminatory and stereotypical discourse against Afro migrants and their descendants. Because of her teachings, her lover considers the possibility of looking at Haitians from a different perspective, even if only in theory: “se había entusiasmado con la posibilidad de ver en los haitianos algo más que la masa de obreros incultos, vulgares y violentos que él trataba en la construcción de la torre. Irena era esa esperanza, la prueba que no todos eran iguales” (Matos Moquete 89). Overall, it can be said that while Irena is marginalized due to her race and gender, she appropriates this space at the margins and develops it as a radical openness, crossing back and forth over established boundaries of race and gender, thereby deconstructing their validity. The exaggeration and contradiction inherent in the opposing representations of this character

question the reliability of what is represented, while at the same time pointing to the complexity of human relations, something that cannot easily be explained or overcome by pure ideology.

On various occasions during this analysis, I have already pointed out how language is used to emphasize the way Afro subjects are represented. Matos Moquete's text also plays with language in the sense of different tongues, both in reference (through the narrator) and in direct dialogue. Other than in the novels previously studied, language in *La avalancha* is not necessarily associated with a specific nationality group. In other words, the way in which the characters use it (or are said to use it) does not serve as a rigid marker of difference or as a fixed boundary. Rather, if we view language as a part of identity, it helps make explicit the fluidity inherent in this process, as the following examples will show.

The news that are spread around at M'a Guiselle's corner—the place that the narrator warns to be home to an unintelligible mixed tongue termed “creñol”—arrive in standard French: “400 haitiens repatriés de la Republique Dominicaine suite à des troubles à Hatillo Palma” (Matos Moquete 25). But the text goes even further than simply employing an ironic use of the colonizer's language instead of the Creole variety that most Haitians speak. The attentive reader once again—as was the case with a number of the other elements I have analyzed so far—finds him or herself facing an ambiguous message that depends on his or her personal interpretation. The French term *trouble* relates to racial identity, Haitians, and the topic of repatriation in the Dominican Republic through its multiple meanings: “confusion” and “distress or turmoil”. The former alludes to the way that dark-skinned individuals are often automatically identified as Haitians by Dominican migration authorities who forcefully deport them to their “home country.” *La avalancha*'s character Sophía Yan exemplifies this process. This Dominican woman, despite many attempts to convince the authorities of her nationality, was forced to

“return” to Haiti because “el color la traicionaba” (Matos Moquete 109). The second meaning of *troubles* may refer to the *black legend* surrounding the Haitians in Hatillo Palma, a Northwestern town in the Monte Cristi province.⁷⁶ In that sense, it connects with the idea that a presence of Haitian migrants in a Dominican community causes and exacerbates tensions.

In the novel’s direct dialogues, Irena, one of the Haitian characters that actually speak in the text, is only cited pronouncing “un francés depurado” (33) and Spanish. At one point the irony goes so far that the narrator announces that “ella le decía en creol,” but then goes on to quote her saying “esto es todo para ti, todo” in Spanish (100). A similar feat happens with M’a Guiselle, the other Haitian to pronounce a direct discourse, who says in perfect Spanish that “Yo hablo mal porque soy haitiana, pero mi hija Mambó habla bien porque es de aquí, nació aquí” (48). The only time that we see the same type of infantilizing language that was used to mark the difference and inferiority of Afro migrants in the sugarcane novels is when the character of the veteran tries to sell his fish to Haitian passersby: “Mucha pecé pa’la mangé de la madame” (39). The interesting thing is that it is a Dominican character that is ridiculed by the text in his attempt to adapt his linguistic output to what he perceives to be the new local tongue. The roles are reversed; the Haitians are depicted as customers, as desired participants in the local economy.

⁷⁶ A connection can be drawn between fictional news and real events in this northwestern region, where Haitians are the backbone of agricultural work on plantain and banana plantations. During the month of May in 2005, according to DR1 Daily News Reports, “A pogrom against Haitians was triggered when a female grocery owner was murdered with machetes by alleged Haitian bandits at Hatillo Palma. [...] [M]ore than 2000 Haitians had been deported to Haiti in response to the murder of the female grocer at Hatillo Palma” (cited in Figueira 47). According to *The Internationalist*, the soldiers targeted “Haitian immigrant workers as well as dark-skinned Dominicans [, and as a result,] over three days, almost the entire black population of the town were deported.”

The second time that “creñol” is spoken it has lost its infantilizing quality. Let us briefly revisit the death of Yan Lily, the Haitian street vendor who was shot by a Dominican grocer,⁷⁷ which presents a turning point in the narrative. It is during the funeral parade for Yan Lily that we witness telltale signs of an easing of tensions, of a coming together of two entities that in some sections of the novel have been represented as incompatible opposites—local Dominicans and migrant Haitians. “A medida que la procesión fúnebre avanzaba, la música se volvía más rítmica y movida. Involuntariamente [...] todos los espectadores movían el cuerpo [...] El capitán movía un pie. El barbero tongoneaba francamente. El joyero, con discreción seguía el ritmo con los labios. Carina no opuso resistencia al contagio del ritmo, moviendo ligeramente la mano” (Matos Moquete 81). In a carnivalized setting, all of the Dominican characters that until this moment represented the fiercest opposition to the “invaders,” let themselves be carried away by the music, thereby taking part in a ritual performed by the “Other.” The crowd’s funeral song resounds in the mixed local language announced in the warning: “Mapoteó, mapoteó, que no va, que no va, que sí va, que sí va, esá, esá, esá [...] tú va, él sí va, tú no quieres ir, tú sí va, va, va” (Matos Moquete 82-3) Where the violent death of Yan Lily then could have been an event to further divide the two groups, it is represented as a catalyst for a momentary sharing and tolerance between the locals and the migrants who are cohabitating in the same space. The division between the two groups becomes increasingly blurred. Instead of assessing the situation from afar, the Dominican characters engage with the Haitians, allowing real contact to determine the nature of their relationship with each other. The narration of the march concludes with the claim that “la voz del veterano se escuchaba en un español nítido. [...] ‘tú va, yo no voy, tú va,

⁷⁷ It is interesting to note that this fictional event could be read as an ironic or twisted take on the incident described in the previous note (please see note 75).

yo no voy, tú va, tú sí va...” (Matos Moquete 85). The difference between the language of his and the crowd’s singing is negligible, almost unperceivable. Overall, the language used in the text’s direct speech—rather than being a device exclusively used to mark negative difference—evolves and varies with the plot and thus serves as a complementary element to the process of identity negotiation that takes place in the novel.

5.3 HYPOCRISY: A POSSIBLE KEY TO CRITICAL SILENCE?

On a couple of different occasions, I have mentioned how *La avalancha* seems to draw inspiration from real events and circumstances linked to the Dominican environment surrounding its production. The novel also, in a sense, foreshadows the continuation of many discriminatory practices into the then foreseeable future, such as violent acts carried out against individuals of Haitian descent and relentless forced deportations: “se anunciaban incendios, redadas, linchamientos masivos” (Matos Moquete 122). There are allusions to the legal struggles that many Haitian workers and their families have to endure, to the vital question of possessing papers. The period of time when the novel was written chronologically coincided with the creation of the foundations for the grave legal changes that would eventually render hundreds of thousands of Dominicans of Haitian descent stateless: the General Law on Migration (285-304).

⁷⁸ Read in retrospective, the text anticipates the dilemma of many Haitian Dominicans at present:

⁷⁸ TC 285-04 was passed in 2004, but not adopted until 2007. It denies children born in the Dominican Republic birth certificates if their parents cannot prove legal Dominican citizenship. It is also one of the foundations for the later denationalization campaign against Haitians, as it defines the status of Haitian workers as “in transit,” therefore negating their children the right to citizenship (Kosinski 389-90).

“Habían nacido en el Petit Haití y no conocían otro sol sobre la tierra [...] Ninguno de los nacidos en esa situación, bajo Capricornio, Taurus o Aries, con acta de nacimiento o sin acta, declarado o sin declarar conocía el Haití de sus padres o ancestros” (Matos Moquete 51).

Yet the text does not limit itself to musing about the laws’ impact on Haitian migrants and their descendants; it also points to some of the hypocrisy related to the discourse and behavior of those who most benefit from such laws. As Sonia Pierre affirms, one of the objectives the dominant classes look to achieve by actively seeking an ideological divide between the two nations of Hispaniola is to “resolver sus conflictos, sus carencias, sus complejos y frustraciones: tomando a la otra y al otro, tomando a los demás, tomando al prójimo y particularmente a los haitianos o sus hijos nacidos en el país como *chivos expiatorios*” (81, emphasis mine). The anti-Haitian discourse then serves as a method of “scape-goating” the “Other” in order to veil the elites’ own responsibility in creating the internal problems the Dominican Republic currently faces, which in itself are partially the result of the policies implemented by the ruling classes over the past century (Pierre 81). The question of the exploitation of a cheap labor force and the human trafficking of Haitian workers that is intrinsically linked with this phenomenon forms part of the reality presented by Matos Moquete’s text. As I have already discussed, a significant sector of Dominican society vehemently insists in the Hispanic origin of Dominicans and pursues an ideology of anti-Haitianism as a foundation for national Dominican identity, and according to Pierre some members of this sector actually run bands of human traffickers—“*traficantes de seres humanos*”—that supply cheap and undocumented Haitian labor to be exploited in Dominican agriculture and in construction projects. Serious and transparent regulation of Haitian immigration would naturally not serve the business interests of this “mafia” (Pierre 80). In *La*

avalancha, the conditions of the selection and transportation of these Haitian subjects to the Dominican sites of employment are described in a manner that highlights their status as objects rather than human beings: “Se traían haitianos de todos los tamaños, edades y condiciones. Se mostraban fotos y recortes de periódicos de los haitianos requeridos, deseados” (Mates Moquete 97). As I have mentioned already, they are continuously referred to as merchandise, as items available for purchase, whose acquisition is subject to regular market competition: “Era urgente conseguir más obreros. No era fácil. Sus competidores en el negocio también esperaban La Camiona, especie de máquina fabricada con piezas de vehículos de desecho para el transporte de la *mercancía humana* de Haití” (Mates Moquete 98, emphasis mine). In essence, these subjects are reduced to slave-like status—something we have seen already in the sugarcane novels—yet here this can be interpreted as a way to make them appear sub-human as well as an indictment of those who treat them in this way: “Quienes traficaban con haitianos son los culpables” (Mates Moquete 46). This section of the text reveals part of the socio-economic complexity that is related to the Haitians’ sub-human position in the Dominican Republic. As Pierre has pointed out (see explanation above), this very reality serves certain Dominican elites that are involved in a mafia that provides cheap and illegal labor to Dominican markets, who in the novel are represented as those running the construction business. Yet, and this leads us back to the notion of hypocrisy, while those who benefit from this trade make sure to outwardly denigrate these Afro subjects, they are the ones who most closely associated with them: “Los hombres del oficio [...] diariamente se relacionaban con haitianos en las construcciones, los empleaban, viajaban a Haití, tenían vínculos con otros constructores y con traficantes de obreros. Sólo quedaban las apariencias. Buscaban que estas relaciones fueran desconocidas, secretas. Pero entre ellos eran conocidas, públicas, aunque en los encuentros sociales fueran los más nacionalistas y los más

anti-haitianos” (Matos Moquete 91). In the same way that the text makes a direct association between terms such as “negro” and “criminal” in order to emphasize their connection, it also associates “delincuentes” with “empresarios.”

The Engineer is the prime example for this. He is the novel’s character that at first glance seems to represent the peaceful and fruitful coexistence of Haitians and Dominicans in the neighborhood. Yet, at the same time, he is one of the main beneficiaries of the continued depiction of the Haitian as “Other,” a discourse that ensures the continued availability of cheap labor for his residential tower project. While, as Di Pietro argues, the Engineer represents a progressive attitude towards the Haitian culture and language and allows, through his lover Irena, that they become part of his life (“La Avalancha”), this character does not shy away from exploiting his lover’s compatriots for his own economic benefit. He may not openly advocate, as does his sister Carina, the continuation of traditional anti-Haitian nationalism; he may even perceive himself as an open-minded reformist against a patriotism based on differentiation with the western neighbor. Nevertheless, he continues to actively pursue profits made accessible by economic despair and an ideology that allows for easy exploitation of the Other. He belongs to the group of entrepreneurs who keep the system of abuse intact, whose socio-economic interests favor the status quo. The Engineer himself arrives at the conclusion that “muchos de sus colegas de profesión [...] eran hipócritas racistas. Vivían de los haitianos ilegales y luego los denunciaban a la autoridad” (Matos Moquete 116). While he excludes himself from this group, claiming that all of his workers are legal and live well, earlier descriptions in the text clearly suggest the opposite.

The representation of an intricate hypocrisy on the part of the business elites once again points to the far-reaching complexity in the relationship between discourse and lived reality,

between advocated intention and real socio-economic interest, related to the presence and treatment of Haitian migrants and their descendants in the Dominican Republic. Those who may be propagating one ideological side or the other may in the end have hidden motivations and interests completely different from what their public demeanor would suggest; in other words, ideology and its related discourse is insufficient as an explanation of how identity and difference are negotiated. An allusion to the complexity that characterizes the process of identity negotiation, of belonging and difference, can be found in all of the novels that form part of this project. In the sugarcane novels, we have seen this through the presence of what I term “fissures” in the primary ideological make up of the text. *Tiempo muerto* also contains such fissures, but Stanley’s text additionally includes some ambiguities in terms of the representation of Afro subjects, particularly in the character of Irma, that invite the reader to doubt the rigidity of any particular discourse. In *La avalancha* identity construction materializes through the ironic juxtaposition of exaggerated opposing views, showing that while different individuals and sectors of society may subscribe or identify more or less with one or the other current, neither can be ignored and wished away. Reality happens in what I have termed the “grey zone,” a space of constant interchange, of competition, of lived experience, of transformation between ideological poles.

The notion that Matos Moquete’s novel critically represents those who derive economic power from the Haitian presence as ambiguous and dubious characters relates to the question posed at the end of the preceding chapter on *Tiempo muerto*: Why has *La avalancha* been met with such extraordinary critical silence? Earlier in this analysis, I have already discussed that, despite the fact that Stanley is representing the *cocolo* experience as a quintessentially Dominican experience, it is still separated from the reader’s and the critic’s reality (both

spatially, as it takes place in the *bateyes* and the *ingenio*, and culturally, as differences are marked for example through language, food, and traditions such as dance). Matos Moquete's text, however, is recounting the cohabitation of Haitians and Dominicans in the same space, and points to the mixing of culture, religion, language through the usurping and confusing of stereotypes that have marked such difference. Its fictional universe is situated much closer to a quotidian reality than the experience of the Other in a faraway rural space of the *ingenio*. *La avalancha*'s author himself says that "Todo lo que he escrito siempre ha sido hurgando en lo que es normal, ordinario, común, buscando aquellos recovecos, rincones, en que se esconde otra vision, otro punto de vista sobre la realidad" (Del Valle). In other words, the normal, the ordinary, the common, is much harder to dismiss as something that does not touch us. This text does not make it easy for the reader to establish a difference between himself and the fictional world depicted, and may even force him or her to connect it with and reflect upon his or her own daily experience. It may cause him or her to experience an uncomfortable sense of familiarity.

This impossibility to escape the closeness of the text's universe to real circumstances also applies to the way that *La avalancha* represents the Dominican elites' and the locals' involvement in the situation regarding Haitian migrants and their descendants. The way in which the text discusses the trafficking of illegal workers, the involvement of the Engineer and his colleagues—representatives of the economically powerful—in exploitation, and the middle class in general make it probable that readers belonging to these groups may take offense in the way that they are represented. It would be difficult for them to avoid identifying themselves with the characters in some way, particularly due to the multiple perspectives at play. It may also be presumed that many of those who would be likely to read this book would belong to a certain stratum of society where they would have been able to receive at least some education. Engaging

with the text critically would force the intellectual—which may very well him or herself belong to one of the sectors implicated in the text—to take a stance on the involvement of elites and on the socio-economic activities and policies that contribute to the creation of tensions and the difficult legal situation for those determined to be of Haitian descent. Ignoring the text in critical terms may present a preferable option, particularly in a country where this topic remains a taboo, a giant controversy, and an emotional trigger at the same time.

I have already mentioned that when writing *La avalancha*, the author Matos Moquete, thanks to his being an established intellectual, was potentially feeling less necessity to placate ideologically diverse sectors of society than Avelino Stanley at the time he published *Tiempo muerto*. Nevertheless, it is obvious that he was well aware of the limitations he would have to face if he touched the sensibilities of other intellectuals and of society in general through his writing. “La otra circunstancia era aquella de sentirme en momentos determinados, impotente con los libreros a los que les llevaba mis publicaciones de entonces, las dejaba a consignación y no conseguía nada [...] nos propusimos este proyecto como hacen otros artistas, por ejemplo, en el mundo del disco, que se declaran agentes libres” (Del Valle). Embracing the possibility of having more artistic and intellectual freedom, he and his wife started their own editorial named *Publicaciones Matos Moquete* in 2002. *La avalancha* is one of the products of this enterprise, yet despite having found its way to the market, it remains virtually invisible and without claim to criticism, mimicking in its own way the plight of many of the Haitian subjects it portrays.

FINAL THOUGHTS

My analysis of *Cañas y bueyes*, *Over*, *Jengibre*, *Tiempo muerto* and *La avalanche* has illustrated that any attempt at defining and understanding the process of national identity formation in the Dominican Republic bears the responsibility to move beyond simplistic binaries. In terms of the literary works in question, this relates to the way race-making functions within the texts—as evidenced by the extent to which these works participate in the negative Othering of Haitians, *cocolos*, and black Dominicans, and to what extent they embrace a politics of social justice or an anti-racist agenda. All five novels contain within them an ideological ambivalence regarding their positioning towards the Afro subject's place in the national arena. In other words, all of them comprise elements rejecting Dominican and migrant Afro-descendants as undesirable Others, at the same time that every text also contains representations of these subjects that point to shared socio-historical and geographical spaces. This type of tension illustrates that the process of constructing concepts of race and consequentially of belonging—essential to Dominican identity formation—is by no means conspicuous or dualistic, but rather fluid, subjective, and complex.

The need to move beyond a black-and-white frame of reference also relates to the way in which much criticism of a largely understudied and overgeneralized Dominican literary tradition has relied on clear-cut dualistic classifications of texts as "pro-Haitian" or "anti-Haitian." The tension between a positioning of endorsement or critique of dominant thinking based on anti-

Haitian and Hispanophile ideology that is present in all of the novels I examine suggests that such a purist approach is insufficient and oversimplified, and does little to reveal the nuances of the interplay between the intended ideological direction of a work and the intellectual's subjective ideological reality.

Rather recent political developments in the Dominican Republic also show a direct connection to what we have seen in the fictional universes of the novels I analyzed in this study. These include, for example, the already mentioned ruling TC 168-13 rendering of hundreds of thousands of Haitians and Dominican Haitians stateless, as well as the imminent threat of deportations following the expiration of the June 2015 deadline to regularize their status through inscription in the national registry, a process riddled with many complications and only possible for a small minority. While the passing and implementation of such laws speak of a persistent presence of conservative and anti-Afro ways of thinking in the circles of the political elites, the issue is much more complex. It would be erroneous to deduct that these types of attitudes are all-encompassing; Dominican national identity cannot be that simplistically categorized. The conversation about these rather recent events is, naturally, not yet concluded, but rather ongoing.

During the fall of 2014, for example, I attended a conference in Santo Domingo, organized by the Association for the Study of the Worldwide African Diaspora. During this time, I was able to witness many elements of Dominican society that were proudly embracing their African roots, and that were actively working to change the negative perceptions and discriminatory practices often experienced by Haitians, Dominican-Haitians, and Afro-Dominicans.⁷⁹ They were openly critical and outspoken of the recently passed ruling, despite

⁷⁹ These included, for example, the organizations MUDHA and reconoci.do, as well as a variety of artists and musical performers that celebrated their African heritage.

possible negative repercussions. At the same time, I also came across quite a different attitude, expressed by a Dominican artist (I prefer not to mention his name here) whom I met during an evening stroll through the city with a couple of colleagues. This individual, himself of markedly African descent, openly criticized and insulted the Haitian presence in the Dominican Republic pronouncing a discourse reflecting a very conservative ideological perspective in support of latest rulings. The same plurality of attitudes and ideological dispositions concerning these issues are also reflected in the local news outlets—such as the *Listín Diario*, for example—and even more so in the reactions and comments that regular individuals post online.

What does this show us? In the end, defining Dominican national identity—and particularly its relationship to racial questions—cannot be limited to the realm of either official discourse or lived experience. Rather, it is created through both of these spaces, remaining an ongoing process full of complexities, a constant negotiation between multiple perspectives and ideological preferences. As we follow the future developments on the island of Hispaniola, and in its eastern nation in particular, the realities revealed by this literary project can provide a valuable alternative to basing analysis on traditional one-sided discourse. This in turn, should make future studies—be they of political, socio-historical, or cultural nature—more accurate, and therefore, more productive.

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